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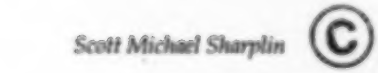
Lear's *Shadows*: *Authority and Multiplicity in Print, Performance and Hypertext*

by

Scott Michael Sharplin 

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Thesis Abstract

"*Lear's* Shadows: Authority and Multiplicity in Text, Performance and Hypertext"

This dissertation compares traditional notions of authority as applied to the dramatic works of William Shakespeare to other modes of discourse which acknowledge and embrace the inherent multiplicity of the works. Recognizing the plays' textual instability and the complex historical relationship between print and performance, this paper reframes Shakespeare's plays as "polytextual" entities with continually fluctuating sites of authority and competing spheres of influence.

Using *King Lear* as its primary focus, the paper examines the play's relationship to scholarly and theatrical conceptions of authority in the past and present. It also considers how the rise of electronic scholarship will further transform ideas of authority and multiplicity. It will conclude by suggesting applications with which the electronic study of Shakespeare's plays may facilitate a collaboration between scholarly and theatrical disciplines, thereby expanding the "polytextual" potentialities for future readers, spectators, and practitioners of Shakespeare's dramatic works.

Table of Contents

Introduction: How Many Lears?.....1

Chapter One: The Shakespearean Fabula.....8

Chapter Two: The Heap of Jewels.....25

Chapter Three: The Great Stage of Fools.....48

Chapter Four: A Freer Field of Pity.....72

Chapter Five: The Web of Imagination.....89

Conclusion.....116

Endnotes.....120

Works Cited.....123

Introduction
How Many Lears?

Lear: Dost thou know me, fellow?
Kent: No, sir, but you have that in your
countenance which I would fain call master.
Lear: What's that?
Kent: Authority.
(*King Lear* 1.4.23-27)

At the reconstructed Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in Bankside, London, spectators are watching Barry Kyle's production of *King Lear*. As the play nears its climax, Edmund turns to address the sea of faces which surround him and asks the audience's advice on his complicated love life:

> To both these sisters have I sworn my love,
> Each jealous of the other as the stung
> Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?
> Both? One? Or neither?
> (5.1.55-58)

Normally, the crowd is silent; they already know that Edmund will not live long enough to enjoy his conquests. But at one performance, a female voice unexpectedly emerges from the crowd. "Take 'em both!" she hollers, to the amusement or irritation of her fellow spectators (*Telegraph* ¶6). The play goes on, and Edmund's choices do not vary; but something has changed. A spontaneous, unauthorized revision of the script has just been made.

"Take 'em both!" is sage advice not only for Edmund, but also for *Lear* scholars of the last two decades. When Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor published *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare* in 1987, it contained two discrete versions of *King Lear* (the First Quarto and the First Folio texts). *Lear* was the only play in the canon to receive this dual treatment. The implication was clear: whereas other

plays with multiple sources could be conflated with no loss of textual authority, *Lear* was such a complex and entangled work that the only way to understand it was to "take 'em both." Similarly, Michael Warren offered both *King Lear* texts in his parallel edition of 1989—but then he topped himself with *The Complete King Lear* (1995), which reprints the Q1, Q2, and F versions of the play. "Take all three," he seems to say. And only five years later, Christie Carson and Jackie Bratton's *King Lear Archive* CD-ROM provides the daunted reader with "ten full texts of *King Lear* as it has been performed over time" (Carson 434). Like an all-you-can-eat buffet, *King Lear* has become the play which never stops giving.

This seemingly wanton multiplicity may appear to be a symptom of technology, but the fact is, there have always been multiple *Lears*. When Shakespeare staged his tragedy in 1605-1606, his audiences would have recognized the story from its popular dramatic predecessor, *The True Chronicle History of King Leir and His Three Daughters*. They may have been shocked to witness Shakespeare's ending, which converts the happy restoration of *King Leir* into a tragic massacre. Part of the contemporary success of Shakespeare's version may be due to the fact that it was an arresting new twist on a familiar tale. Even before *Lear* was published, spectators in Shakespeare's theatres were already mindful of multiple texts.

In 1681, Nahum Tate twisted *Lear* back towards its happy roots again, rewriting Shakespeare's play entirely to service Restoration tastes. Tate's new *Lear* reigned undisputed on the English stage for nearly a century—and even when performance fashion began its turn to Shakespeare's favour, many elements

of Tate's *Lear* were still deemed improvements by directors and producers. In consequence, a series of cross-pollinated versions formed—George Colman's in 1768, David Garrick's in 1773, and Philip Kemble's in 1808—hybrids which seem, to modern eyes, like the perverse progeny of a sacred cow and a black sheep, but which were popular in their own times, in part because they emphasized their own hybrid status.

Even when Shakespeare's *Lear* had been fully restored to English stages, multiplicity loomed large in scholarly circles. Which text was Shakespeare's? The unauthorized but timely First Quarto? Or the posthumous but privileged First Folio? The differences between the two texts—more profound than nearly any other Shakespeare play—sent twentieth-century scholars scurrying for answers. By the 1980s, the New Bibliographers, who endorsed the conflation of the two texts, were exhausted, and the trophy went to the revisionists, who argued that *both* texts were authoritative. The publication of Wells and Taylor's two-text *Complete Oxford* was the clincher. There are simply two *King Lears*.

Two *Lears*—or three, or four, or seven, if one widens one's parameters to include the play's entire history. But any scholar who believes the multiplicity ends there—that the seven *Lears* are no more than seven—would make a good fool. The list can be expanded to include performance scripts, conflations, bowdlerized editions, filmic adaptations (some of which, like Akira Kurosawa's *Ran*, make use of Shakespeare's tale but not his text), novelizations (eg. Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*) and dramatic transformations which exceed even Tate in their latitude for reinterpretation. To suggest that works like Elaine

Feinstein's *Lear's Daughters* (1987), Julia Pascal's *Yiddish Queen Lear* (1999) or Howard Barker's (aptly titled) *Seven Lears* (1990) are somehow Shakespeare's play would be absurd. But they rely on Shakespeare for their own authority as literary works; and Shakespeare's *Lear*, or *Lears*, are simultaneously authorized and challenged by their presence. They are all iterations within a textual and cultural network—an infinitely extensible web of *Lears*.

King Lear is not alone in this; multiplicity is everywhere. Structuralist and post-structuralist discourse acknowledges that texts are unstable entities in almost every way—composed through fluctuating socio-cultural filters, open to readers' transformations, not even "self-identical." At the same time, Shakespearean studies have embraced performance as a valid venue for exploring the manifold interpretive possibilities of the plays—possibilities which must perforce include adaptation, improvisation and wholesale rejections of authority.

Such insurmountable instability makes scholars, readers, and practitioners of Shakespeare understandably uncomfortable. Textual scholars find that their bibliographic and interpretive tasks become increasingly complex. It is, after all, a challenge to draw definitive conclusions about a text when the text is busy self-replicating. H.R. Woudhuysen, for example, writes "If all editions can only ever be approximate, if they can only ever be copies of an unrecoverable original, then all editions, and for that matter all performances, betray the work itself" (Woudhuysen 42). Theatrical practitioners of Shakespeare would object to the assertion that performance constitutes an act of betrayal. They have different but equally complex methods for monitoring the authority of their own textual events

and outcomes. In fact, all of the people who encounter a text like *Lear*—scholars, performers, directors, adaptors, and readers—exert varied spheres of influence upon the relative authority of the manifold versions of the work. Whether you take one, "take 'em both," or "take 'em all" depends upon where you stand, and what the play means to you.

This dissertation is a survey of the methods used to mitigate the daunting multiplicity of the infinite, intertextual *King Lear*. I am concerned particularly with the ways in which professionals in different periods of history, and often working with conflicting discourses, have sought to emphasize authority as a means of enforcing stability upon the variegated play. My study will examine many iterations of *King Lear*—not only those deemed authentic by contemporary scholars, but also versions (such as Tate's adaptation and its hybrid offspring) which held different measures of authority in their own times. I will consider the tensions which arise between performance-based interpretations of *King Lear* (as envisioned by directors and embodied by actors) and traditional scholarly conceptions of authority. I will reflect on how a project like the new Shakespeare's Globe Theatre alters the performative dynamics of a play like *Lear*. Finally, I will turn to electronic scholarship as a means by which we can resolve the paradoxes of authority surrounding *Lear*, and start to view its multiplicity as an asset, not a fault.

I will begin by stepping back from *Lear* to survey Shakespearean textual scholarship in general, arguing that bibliographers and scholars have traditionally dealt with issues of multiplicity by constructing an imaginary narrative between

themselves, as authorized interpreters, and Shakespeare's phantom master-texts. In Chapter Two, I will evaluate the roles and tactics of practitioners of "unauthorized" Shakespearean texts, determining the ways in which iconoclasts such as Tate establish equilibrium between their texts and those approved by scholars. In Chapter Three, my study will turn to actorial interpretations of *King Lear*, and I will consider how actors exploit improvisation, textual ambiguities, and their own performative dynamics to expand their own authoritative influence upon the play. Chapter Four will scrutinize the New Globe's 2001 production of *King Lear* in order to demonstrate how Renaissance drama and architecture intersect with twenty-first century interactive aesthetics. Finally, following a survey of recent print attempts to stabilize *Lear*, Chapter Five will examine the archival possibilities inherent in hypertext, and speculate on how post-print technologies can help both scholars and performers to navigate through the myriad manifestations of *King Lear*.

Michael D. Bristol, speaking for "more conservative-minded scholars," expresses the fear that textual multiplicity will create "a 'slippery slope' leading to the radical decomposition of the text as a stable and self-identical entity" (Bristol 1990:114). But this "decomposition of the text" has already occurred—and may have occurred even before that which we traditionally mark as its initial "composition." But there is no cause for fear or for despair. This paper is a celebratory recognition of the unstable work, a slide down the 'slippery slope,' to chart its history and find its terminus, and to propose a system with which others

can mark their own progress through the maze of infinite *Lears* and *Lear's* shadows.

Chapter One
The Shakespearean Fabula

> As editors, we stage the plays we contemplate, and in the process they become our own.
> (Orgel 47)

Imagine the First Folio did not exist. A grievous loss: eighteen plays at a clap, and many more denied their textual integrity, stripped naked, subject to the corruptions of the 'bad' quartos. Only a handful of plays, like *King Lear*, which exist in 'good' quartos, would emerge unscathed—and even *Lear* would lose the 115 lines which are exclusive to the Folio.

But what would change besides the transmission of the texts themselves? In their general introduction, Folio editors John Heminge and Henry Condell provide a set of parameters for readers to evaluate the contents of the codex. Readers, and particularly scholars, have taken these parameters to heart, applying their authority to all iterations of Shakespeare which would follow through the centuries. Without these editorial injunctions, our authoritative ascriptions of the plays would have proceeded along very different tracks.

First, Heminge and Condell stress the import of the Book itself. In a paragraph primarily concerned with boosting sales, the editors attempt to persuade their readers that "the fate of all Bookes depends upon [their] capacities" (sig. A3).[1] They then grammatically elide any distinction between the Book and its Author: "it is not our province, who only gather his works, and give them you, to praise him. It is yours that read him … Reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe … And such Readers we wish him." (sig. A3). The Folio is of tremendous import (and therefore worth buying) because it is the physical embodiment of its

ingenious scribe. While "other authors may gesture towards their books … Shakespeare *is* the book" (Marcus 19).

Next, the editors acknowledge that there is another, more familiar site for Shakespearean instantiation: the theatre. "Know," they write, "these Playes have had their triall already, and stood out all Appeales" (sig. A3). Heminge and Condell are flirting with a paradox here, implying that performance (and not publication) is an authoritative proving ground. They resolve it somewhat by favouring the critical judgment of readers ("Read him … and if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to understand him" [sig. A3]) over the "Magistrate[s] of wit" who "sit on the Stage at *Black-Friers,* or the *Cocke-pit*, to arraigne Playes dailie" (sig. A3). The implication is that performance, as a sort of kangaroo court, does not yield the trenchant understanding of the plays that the act of reading can provide.

Finally, the editors claim primacy over other published versions of the plays. The Folio's texts appear "perfect of their limbes … absolute in their numbers," having been transcribed without "a blot in his papers" (sig. A3). The editors invoke authorial fidelity in contrast to the "diverse stolne, and surreptitious copies" (ie. the quartos), which they denounce as "maimed, and deformed" (sig. A3). Again, their motivations are economic, but their claims to authority are so assured, so vehement, that centuries of scholars have taken them at their word.

These three parameters have, by and large, set forth our understanding of Shakespearean textual authority. Scholars expect authority to reside within the book. Despite the fact that plays are written for (and proven on) the stage,

scholars tend to view performance as a secondary site, rife with textual instability and "unruly meanings" (Berger 153). And they imagine a scenario in which Shakespeare's manuscripts passed from his hand directly to the Folio editors. Despite the fact that these views have been challenged and dismissed by both historians and bibliographers, literary scholars still tenaciously adopt the Folio's parameters. In doing so, they seek a *fabula*, and their vain search occurs to the detriment of all readers and practitioners of Shakespeare's plays.

A *fabula* is like a fable. Eighteenth-century audiences were interested not in Shakespeare's language, but in the moralistic fables which they felt lay at the heart of all his stories (Marsden 65). In Mieke Bal's narratological discourse, the term *fabula* denotes the third, most abstract level of narrative, lying beneath both the *narrative text* (a story as related within a particular medium) and the *story* (a specific arrangement of events). I use it not to refer to the stories Shakespeare wrote, however, but rather to the story of Shakespeare's *works*: how they were created, and what has happened to them since. Scholars who adopt the First Folio's parameters are not concerned exclusively with the texts as they appear; they are preoccupied with the abstract creative process which produced them.

Articulating such a fabula is difficult, because it lies inchoately behind all structured narratives of Shakespeare's life. Stephen Orgel defines it variously as "the playwright's imagination, or the hand of the master, the authentic witness of Shakespeare's own history … not the authentic play, with its unstable, infinitely revisable script, but an authentic Shakespeare" (Orgel 256). Margreta de Grazia more poetically describes it as "the manuscripted harmonies of Shakespeare's

immortal soul" (de Grazia 1988:71). The key, according to four centuries of scholars, is the idea of the *manuscript*—what New Bibliographers have classified the 'foul papers,' or what Michael D. Bristol paradoxically calls "the *finished* originals" (Bristol 1990:98) which inform all subsequent versions of the work. It is either "the form of the work that the author wanted us to have, or *should have wanted us to have*" (Shillingsburg 13; italics mine). As we shall see, the quest for these authorial spectres tends to begin at the site where they were first conceived—the First Folio.

Even the earliest post-Folio editors acknowledged the "finished originals" may be out of their reach. Nicholas Rowe's 1709 complete works was the first to advertise the plays as having been "revis'd and corrected": "I have taken some Care to redeem [Shakespeare] from the Injuries of former Impressions," writes Rowe, "I must not pretend to have restor'd this Work to the Exactness of the Author's Original Manuscripts: Those are lost" (qtd. in Urkowitz 1983: 25). Nonetheless, Rowe promises to provide "the true Reading" to the best of his scholarly abilities. Although he claims to have compared "several Editions" in order to determine the "true" texts, later scholarship has shown that Rowe worked only from a 1685 reprint of the First Folio (Urkowitz 1983: 25). Rowe, then, seems to reject the Folio's claim that its texts were "perfect in their limbs" and "absolute in their numbers" while simultaneously accepting its primacy as the site of Shakespearean authority.

Subsequent editors adopted similar positions, though their interpretations of the Folio's parameters would vary. Alexander Pope, for example, rejects

outright the Folio's claim that the author wrote without "a blot in his papers." He believes Shakespeare must have revised his plays, and he refers to quarto versions of the plays for support in his own alterations. But his preferred text remains the Folio, mainly because he suspects that the quartos suffer from "theatrical degradation" (Urkowitz 1983: 25). Pope's cardinal parameter, therefore, is the Folio's implied preferment of the printed text over the theatrical playscript. He is so adamant in this priority that even Heminge and Condell start to appear suspicious, since they were actors as well as editors.

Samuel Johnson continues Pope's trend of comparing Folio with quarto texts, but with a different methodology. Johnson speculates that Shakespeare wrote all the material contained in all surviving texts, but that theatrical pressures persuaded him to compromise his otherwise ideal work. In assessing one passage from *Lear*, Johnson consciously attempts to guess the author's thoughts: "I suppose *Shakespeare* thought his plot opened rather too early, and made the alteration to veil the event from the audience; but trusting too much to himself, and full of a single purpose, he did not accommodate his new lines to the rest of the scene" (qtd in Urkowitz 1983: 32). Following Pope, Johnson vilifies theatrical influences, but his solution is to conflate pre- and post-revised materials, creating a new, wholly Shakespearean text—what the author "*should have wanted us to have*." In cases where the variant texts are irresolvable, he prefers the Folio: "[It] is generally best, and was probably nearest to *Shakespeare's* last copy" (qtd. in Urkowitz 1983: 32).

The Folio's authority received its first important challenge in 1768 (the same year Johnson finished publishing his complete works), when Edward Capell observed that the quarto editions, which Heminge and Condell disparage in their preface, had in fact served as templates for many of the Folio playtexts (de Grazia 1988:76). This contradiction threw both the Folio's authenticity and its editors' probity into grave doubt, and plunged Shakespearean bibliography into over a century of "gloomy pessimism" (de Grazia 1988:74). At last, in 1909, Alfred W. Pollard's *Shakespeare's Folios and Quartos* launched a buoyant new wave of bibliographic activity. Pollard's tactic is to distinguish 'good' quartos—those which the Folio had used in setting its own texts—from 'bad' quartos—the "maimed and deformed" publications which the Folio dismisses in its introduction. This partitioning redeemed both "the quality of the Folio's copies of Shakespeare's plays as well as the integrity of the two men responsible for the collection" (de Grazia 1988:72). Moreover, Pollard's material approach to the authoritative lineage of the plays encouraged the style of textual criticism now known as the New Bibliography.

The Shakespearean fabula looms large in the writings of the New Bibliographers. As Paul Werstine observes, W.W. Greg's "editorial method depends upon the identification, of quite specific terms, of the now lost manuscript copy that once lay behind an early printing of a Shakespeare play" (Werstine 50). Fredson Bowers agrees, adding a scientific aura to the process: "The eclectic effort to recover from the transmitted documents the exact wording of the author's lost original does not constitute unnecessary editorial interposition

… so long as its principles are critically, linguistically, and bibliographically sound" (qtd in Bristol 1990:104). The New Bibliographic epistemology was taxonomic, classifying conjectural source documents as 'foul papers,' 'fair papers,' 'promptbooks,' 'transcripts,' 'players' parts' and 'plots' (Honigmann 2004:78), and then tracing various hereditary paths towards the unseen master-text.

In most of this work, the Folio's parameters continue to hold sway. W.W. Greg's bibliographic preferences may serve to represent the majority, due to his popularity amongst the New Bibliographers. Greg believes the manuscripts which served as printers' copies for published editions were either 'foul papers' (ie. the author's originals) or 'promptbooks' (ie. versions copied and adapted for theatrical performance). The evidence Greg uses to distinguish which documents informed which versions also reveals his textual bias:

> If a play was printed from the author's original draft, we may expect to find in it contradictions and uncertainties of action and unresolved textual tangles; if, on the other hand, a play was printed from a theatrical fair copy, we may indeed expect to find such contradictions and tangles smoothed out, but we have no assurance that this was done by the author himself.
>
> (qtd. in Werstine 51)

Like Pope and Johnson, Greg prefers literary authority over theatrical revision, even when the latter makes more sense. Thus the Folio's tenets—the primacy of the text, the inferiority of theatrical versions, and the idea that Shakespeare never blotted a line—remain influential, even while the Folio texts themselves are being autopsied.

When the Folio's ideology was challenged next, it was the third of its precepts that served as Achilles' heel. By the 1950s, even New Bibliographers as renowned as Fredson Bowers were raising doubts that "the perfection of Shakespeare's plays was achieved in only a single act of composition" (qtd. in Honigmann 2004:82), but it was not until the 1970s that the 'revisionists' found a common cause. First, Michael J. Warren presented a paper arguing that the variations between the First Quarto and the Folio versions of *King Lear* were such that "there may be no single 'ideal play' of *King Lear* (all of 'what Shakespeare wrote')" (Warren 1978: 96), but rather that F is an extensive authorial revision of Q1, and the two should be viewed as separate but equal versions, not subject to conflation (Warren 1978: 105). Next, Warren and Gary Taylor published *The Division of the Kingdoms* (1983), an anthology of critical analysis supporting Warren's claim. The impact of this publication was huge; suddenly the notion of a "finished original" seemed absurd, at least in the case of *Lear*. The revisionist movement won a third round with the 1987 publication of the Complete Oxford Shakespeare (edited by Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells), in which *Lear* appears twice—Q1 followed by F—thereby visibly confirming that Shakespeare, in fact, blotted many lines indeed.[2] The Oxford edition further breaks from tradition by claiming to favour theatrical texts, "in the belief that they can help us come closer than before to the plays as they were acted by Shakespeare's company" (Wells xxvii). Ironically, the theatrical texts they favour are, in fact, the Folio texts (since, "as men of the theatre, Heminge and Condell had access to prompt-books" [Wells xxix]).[3]

It now begins to appear as though the Folio texts can be anything to anyone. As critical trends in the 1980s and 1990s came more and more to acknowledge and embrace the theatrical aspect of Shakespeare's plays, the Folio proved malleable enough to accommodate them. Thus when John C. Meagher examines "Shakespeare's deliberate designing of his plays and … how they would work in the experience of his audiences" (Meagher 15), he cheerfully employs the Folio texts, despite the fact that neither Shakespeare nor his audiences had ever seen them. And when Patrick Tucker, a Shakespearean director, labours to discover the "original approach" which Shakespeare's players would have taken when performing his plays, he not only employs the Folio texts, but he religiously observes their punctuation, capitalization, and versification—again, despite the fact that such compositional details were chosen seven years after Shakespeare's death. By the twenty-first century, the Folio has achieved an authoritative stature which transcends even its own dogma.

And even with the rise of revisionism, some fascination with the singular manuscript endures. As late as 1986, D.F. McKenzie continued to advocate the creation of "a master-text, a kind of ideal copy-text, transcending all the versions and true to the essential intention of the 'work'" (McKenzie 29). McKenzie defines 'work' here variously: it may be "the form traditionally imputed to an archetype" or the "form seen as immanent in each of the versions but not fully realized in any one of them" (McKenzie 29). It may even be "conceived of as always potential, like that of a play, where the text is open and generates new meanings according to new needs" (McKenzie 29). While this open-ended

approach to textuality is a good fit for Shakespeare's texts, it doesn't help us to visualize the nature of McKenzie's master-text. His use of the word *intention*, though—which he would have us wield as a "speculative instrument" (McKenzie 29)—provides an important clue in discerning the outline of the fabula.

Peter Shillingsburg distinguishes "two fundamentally different concepts of intention" (Shillingsburg 34) which operate in textual studies. "Intention to mean" is "a single, overall, controlling idea applicable to the single finished text of the whole work" (Shillingsburg 34), whereas "intention to do" is what the author seeks to set down on paper – a deliberate sequence of letters and punctuation. Shillingsburg imagines that an author first intends to *mean* something, and then decides how to go about expressing his meaning through language. "Intention to *do*," he observes, is "more immediately recoverable," than "intention to *mean*," which is, at best, "inconclusively recoverable through critical interpretation" (Shillingsburg 34-35). McKenzie's third definition of 'works' implies that *meaning* is too changeable to be recovered, but he clearly believes that an "intention to do"—that is, the arrangement of words that Shakespeare intended to be heard or read—can still be grasped. Other scholars may believe that, if one could determine Shakespeare's "intention to do," it would, indeed, yield up a definitive "intention to mean." In short, if they can stabilize the texts, they have a chance of understanding them.

However, a third kind of intention creeps in around the edges of this discourse, complicating matters. Shillingsburg, referring to the work of Jerome McGann and other sociological bibliographers, calls the third kind "what the

author wanted or expected others to do" (Shillingsburg 36). From this perspective, authorial intention does not stop upon the manuscript page. An author understands that his 'foul papers' will be modified, transformed, perhaps improved along their journey into print. To refer back to W.W. Greg's preference of 'foul papers' over 'promptbooks': Greg sees Shakespeare's "intention to do" as inevitably including "contradictions and uncertainties of action" (Werstine 51), and he shuns corrected versions because "we have no assurance that [they were] done by the author himself" (Werstine 51). A sociological editor like McGann, on the other hand, would assume that Shakespeare *expected* those corrections to be made (by actors, editors and/or compositors), and that the 'promptbook' versions therefore reflect Shakespeare's ultimate intention for the texts.

Rather than being the recent invention of sociological editors, this third kind of intention has, in fact, been employed by editors all along to justify their attitudes and their emendations of the texts. Nicholas Rowe simply places himself in the role of Shakespeare's servant, correcting "the Injuries of former Impressions" (Urkowitz 1983: 25). Shakespeare expected Heminge and Condell to do a job, and they did it poorly; Rowe is repairing the damage. Pope and Johnson go a step further by targeting the theatrical profession as a site of particular disservice to Shakespeare. The "arbitrary Additions, Expunctions, Transpositions of scenes and lines, confusion of Characters and Persons, [and] wrong application of Speeches" (qtd. in Urkowitz 1983: 26) perpetrated by players could not possibly express what the poet Shakespeare would have wanted for his works, and so the eighteenth-century editors are serving the author's best

wishes. So too with the New Bibliographers, and the revisionists, and even performance-based scholars. In all cases, scholars and editors feel justified in promoting their version of the texts to the exclusion of all others because they, above all, have succeeded in "preserving either the form of the work that the author wanted us to have, or *should have wanted us to have*" (Shillingsburg 13; italics mine).

By now, it should come as no surprise that this endless editorial project of correction is legitimized by the dogma of the First Folio. Heminge and Condell designate themselves as authoritative editors, but they also sanction future editors to carry on the task of recovering the Shakespearean originals. In their introduction, just before they start disparaging the 'bad' quartos, the Folio editors write:

> It had bene a thing, we confesse, worthie to have been wish'd, that the Author himselfe had liv'd to have set forth, and overseen his owne writings; But since it hath bin ordain'd otherwise, and he by death departed from that right, we pray you do not envie his Friends, the office of their care, and paine, to have collected and publish'd them;
> (sig. A3)

It is a double assurance of authority: they are the author's friends, and friends would never sacrifice so much for a substandard finished product. But then they add this unusual envoi:

> And so we leave you to other of his Friends, whom if you need, can bee your guides; if you neede them not, you can leade your selves, and others. And such Readers we wish him.
> (sig. A3)

Heminge and Condell, the original editors, are Shakespeare's friends. Who could these other friends be, except subsequent editors? The onus is upon them to guide

readers who cannot guide themselves. And surely these latter-day friends must take the same degree of care and pain in their publishing efforts, correcting oversights and errors which the First Friends (staunch but fallible) committed.

The complete Shakespearean fabula is now in view. It is a self-affirming tradition of service in pursuit of Shakespeare's master-text, the text he "should have wanted us to have," the text that he anticipated we would never stop searching for. Envisioned and enabled by the Folio, the fabula is a narrative that includes all scholars, and which validates their efforts through their inclusion. When Johnson, for example, dares to speculate on Shakespeare's mental process, he is writing out a portion of the fabula—and he is writing *himself* into the action, as the designated heir of Shakespeare's thoughts. The Shakespearean fabula is not, then, the story of an ingenious author who never blotted a line; it is the story of an ingenious author and all the ingenious editors who followed him, collectively endeavouring towards a perfect text.

There are a number of serious problems with this doctrine. The first is that Shakespeare probably didn't expect Heminge and Condell to publish his plays in a Folio after his death, and he *certainly* didn't expect four subsequent centuries of editors to continue publishing them. During his lifetime, Shakespeare appears to have been totally indifferent to the publication of his plays. It is, then, very likely that "what Shakespeare would have wanted" for his texts has nothing whatsoever to do with publication. The second problem is that, as Stephen Orgel writes, "the notion of final or complete versions assumed by virtually all modern editors of Shakespeare is inconsistent with everything we know not only about Renaissance

theatrical practice, but about the way writers in fact work" (Orgel 4). As an Elizabethan playwright, Shakespeare's authority properly ended when he turned a script over to his company. From there, revisions were most likely a collaborative process in which Shakespeare (as a player) probably participated as one voice among many. Scholars tend to displace their own aversion to collaboration onto Shakespeare, but there is no reason to doubt that, as a writer in his own time and professional context, collaboration is "what Shakespeare would have wanted." The third problem arises from the second: if Shakespeare expected that his scripts would be transformed by the dramatic process, then there is no way he could have seen his manuscripts as 'finished originals.' "To put the matter in intentionalist terms," writes Leah S. Marcus, "Shakespeare may not have thought of his plays as existing in some single fixed form" (Marcus 45). Editors' attempts to recover the original texts (before "theatrical degradation" or publication) are, therefore, not only impossible but also contrary to the author's intentions. They are attempts to expose the texts *before* they are complete.

What, then, did Shakespeare want his texts to be? Since the answer would seem to lie outside the traditional boundaries of the 'stabilized' text, we must adopt a discourse of intentionality which allows for multiplicity. Joseph Grigley offers such a discourse in "The Textual Event." Grigley writes that "the idea of a physically objectified text offers a false sense of security … and since we can hold it in our hands (say, a book or a manuscript), we find additional comfort in its tangibility" (Grigley 186). Scholars have projected their own sense of security back upon Shakespeare, presuming that he, too, would have wanted his texts to be

objects. But in the playhouse, texts are not objects—they are utterances, speech acts, *events*.

Grigley goes on to distinguish between "text-as-an-event" and "text-as-an-outcome." The textual event is defined by its historicity and locality. "Because performances are overtly detached from the apparent (but not real) fixedness of books, they force us quite directly to confront their ephemerality" (Grigley 187-188)—that is, their inability to be recovered after the event is over. However, Grigley admits that textual events can be *recorded* through technologies—audio or video recordings, in the case of modern performances, or written records, in the case of Renaissance plays. Such recordings "are necessarily imperfect" (Grigley 190) in that they fail to capture the full parameters of the event (its spontaneity, its "liveness"), but they are nonetheless important links to the original event. They are its textual *outcomes*.

This schema, which imbues performance with authority and demotes the printed text to the status of an afterthought, is an inversion of the Folio-bred dogma perpetuated by editors like Johnson and Pope. However, it does not completely circumscribe the issue, for, as Jerome McGann points out, the print tradition of a text constitutes "a series of specific acts of production" (McGann 1983:52), which, as *acts*, have their own significance. The publication of the Folio is an "outcome" which exists in secondary authority to performance, but it is also an artistic "event" in its own right, with cultural and aesthetic consequences of the sort I have discussed above. Moreover, all subsequent publications of Shakespeare texts are both "outcomes" (of the Folio and/or the quartos) and

"events" (in their own sociocultural contexts). And most of them, by making the plays available to performers, have enabled further textual events onstage.

Therefore, a Shakespearean work is composed of interlocking iterations of text-as-event and text-as-outcome. To try to assign intentionality or authority in such a chain is a fool's errand, because the formerly stable authority of any single text (the Folio, for instance) varies depending on whether the text is seen as *event* or *outcome*. Similarly, the Shakespearean fabula is exposed for what it truly is: a chicken-and-egg conundrum. At best, the composition of the manuscripts could be read as a transient textual event designed to yield an outcome in performance. At worst, the manuscripts belong to the "preutterance stages of the work" which, like "the splashes and daubs on the canvas" of the uncompleted *Mona Lisa*, are not formally versions of the work at all (McLaverty 141). Scholars may choose to include the theoretical manuscripts within their mental configuration of the works, or they may not. But all attempts to install them as singular and stable master-texts are denials of the extant chain of textual events and outcomes, and assaults upon the Shakespearean textual tradition itself.

In light of such radical redefinitions of textuality, Joseph Grigley significantly reframes literary works as "polytexts" (Grigley 176). He writes:

> It is important to note that the work is not equivalent to the *sum* of its texts (which would create some kind of hybridized eclectic text), but instead is an ongoing – and infinite – manifestation of textual appearances, *whether those texts are authorized or not*.
> (Grigley 176, italics in original)

It will be worth bearing this inclusive designation in mind as we proceed to examine *King Lear*, with its abundance of unauthorized utterances. Grigley's

statement also sounds the death knell for Folio-centric authority. Leah S. Marcus writes that "the First Folio gives readers two choices: either we must accept the transcendent Shakespeare, or there will be no Shakespeare at all, only an untidy pile of fragments that cannot be assembled" (Marcus 32). Now, the dilemma is no longer in effect: the Folio is just another fragment; the pile is infinite, but has a pattern; and the pattern is itself the key to apprehending the transcendent Shakespeare.

Chapter Two
The Heap of Jewels

> Know thou this, that men
> Are as the time is.
> (*King Lear* 5.3.31-32)

A few words about Nahum Tate's *King Lear*: "appalling" (Dawson 181), "insipid" (Nameri 12), "hideous" (Rosenberg 8), "invites ridicule and deserves it" (Mack 9). Distaste for Tate's 1680 adaptation of *Lear*, which rewrites tragedy as sentimental melodrama, is universal in contemporary criticism. Tate's blasphemies are legion: excising the Fool, averting the play's catastrophe, concocting lame romantic subplots, and—worst of all, to modern eyes—replacing most of Shakespeare's poetry with his own. Never mind that Shakespeare himself performed similar alterations of plot, theme, genre, and language when adapting his own contemporaneous source, the anonymous *King Leir*. The difference, we are told, is evident. Shakespeare, the genius, improved—extracted gold from dross. Tate, the traitor, tarnished and despoiled.

Yet, just as Shakespeare could not have guessed his works would be revered throughout the world, Nahum Tate was surely unaware his adaptation would forever cast him as a Judas in the Shakespeare Gospel. In the Restoration, changing Shakespeare's plots and poetry was common practice: at least twenty-three "radical adaptations" were written between 1660 and 1737 (Marsden 15), along with others whose texts do not survive. What puts Tate's *Lear* a cut beneath the others, in our eyes, is its longevity. Between 1680 and 1756, Tate's *Lear* effectively replaced its predecessor on the stage. After that span, its influence was still felt in the hybridized performance scripts of Garrick, Colman, and Kean.

Only in 1838—158 years after it debuted—did Tate's *Lear* cede the stage to Shakespeare. According to some critics, its influence is *still* felt in modern-day productions (see Adler 52-56)—an influence spanning 325 years and countless stages. It is therefore not so much the act of revision but its theatrical legacy that so incenses those who would prefer their Shakespeare undiluted.

Recently, some scholars have been able to penetrate the veil of rage to pose some rational questions about Tate's enduring *coup de théâtre*. "Why and how," asks Nancy Klein Maguire, "did a merely competent playwright capture the *Lear* market for more than a century and a half?" (Maguire 29). While scholars' answers have made valuable insights into the effects of Restoration politics and social mores, none have told us why Tate's *Lear* held the stage so long after its cultural moment had passed. If Tate's version is so clearly inferior, why was it preferred by generations of producers, actors, and audiences—particularly when the steady rise of the print trade made the "real" *Lear* increasingly available?

The answer lies within the complex intersection of performances and texts, and in the dynamic of authority which fluctuates unendingly between the two. Tate's defamiliarizing stage *Lear* and the familiar *Lear* of print epitomize an equilibrium which all theatrical polytexts possess, and which allowed each version to reinforce the localized authority of the other. Furthermore, the defamiliarizing process which authorized Tate's *Lear* has informed all subsequent performances of the work, from the most faithful productions of Shakespeare's text to radical rewrites such as Edward Bond's *Lear* and Akira Kurosawa's *Ran*. Ultimately, all these performances belong to the same adaptative tradition, so that,

while Tate's *Lear* may appear to be the Bastard of the Shakespeare family, it is no more illegitimate than any other iterations before or since.

As I have implied, the sociopolitical exigencies which influenced Tate's adaptation were not enough to maintain its popularity. Maguire argues that the play's new ending, which suggests the joint rule of Edgar and Cordelia, "foreshadows the succession of Mary and William" in 1688 (Maguire 39). Jean I. Marsden adds that the new ending "stresses Britain's growing power" (Marsden 29) in an enduringly patriotic way. These political touchstones still leave ample gaps, however. William and Mary's reign ended in 1702, and the Hanoverian successions which followed bore no resemblance to the pat conclusion of Tate's *Lear*. As for the play's imperialist overtones, they should have resonated most strongly in the nineteenth century, when Great Britain was developing her Empire. Yet it is during the nineteenth century that Tate's star fades and Shakespeare's reignites. Clearly, political concerns are not exclusively responsible.

On a cultural level, Marsden and Michael Dobson both emphasize the contemporary fashion for 'poetic justice,' a characteristic which Tate's play exudes: "Even if virtue suffers, it suffers nobly, and villainy is inevitably punished" (Marsden 28). Dobson maintains that it was this strain of "apolitical' domestic pathos" which allowed the play "to survive by over a century the dynasty it was produced to defend" (Dobson 83-84). But 'poetic justice' in this sense was just a fad. It did not appear as a theoretical term until 1692 (Marsden 162), and by 1711, it was being dismissed as a "chimerical notion" (Addison, qtd.

in Nameri 14). Marsden even suggests that 'poetic justice' was itself a political manoeuvre, providing a "controlled environment" (Marsden 15) to shield audiences from issues of ambiguous morality during the politically unstable period following the Restoration. This would seem to refute Dobson's argument. As a political device, surely 'poetic justice' had no more inherent longevity than the politics which caused it.

Without broader notions to explain the play's endurance, scholars turn to theatrical aesthetics—and in doing so, manage to discredit both practitioners and audiences of the times. Ruby Cohn, for example, blames selfish thespians for the repression of the tragedy: "Many actors declared their preference for Tate over Shakespeare, and audiences were not given the choice" (Cohn 236). On the flip side, Marsden acknowledges that during the eighteenth century, "Theatre managers toyed with the idea of rejecting the happy ending or returning the fool but ultimately held back, largely because of fears of audience displeasure" (Marsden 91). There may be some truth to the stalemate suggested here (with theatres and audiences "blaming" one another for the play's success), but it seems unlikely to have persevered for quite so long. Actors are forever craving new and challenging roles—and a tragic Lear is undoubtedly more challenging than a pathetic one. As for the public, their democratic voice is in their coin. If they had wearied of Tate's *Lear* before 1756, box office totals would certainly have said as much.

What Cohn and Marsden's contradictory opinions *do* reveal is that all parties were conceptually aware that there were two *Lears* at play. Managers who

toy with reinstating Shakespeare are alive to the disparities between the texts, and so are actors who declare a preference. Similarly, audiences of the time could be relied upon to understand the dual status of the play after Tate, even as they supported his version with their attendance. Samuel Johnson's famous comment says it best: "In the present case the publick has decided" (Johnson 12). In order to decide, one must have been presented with two possibilities. And indeed they were, as Shakespeare's *Lear* continued to appear in print throughout the time of Tate's theatrical success. Even non-literate spectators were likely aware of the existence of a different, tragic *Lear*. Unlike politics, social mores, and theatrical fashions, this dual awareness did not vary over time. And it was this awareness, and the "historical stereoscopy" (Miller 59) it provided audiences, which gave the two *Lears* balance and longevity.

To best explain the function and appeal of the two *Lears*, I will employ a term suggested by Jerome McGann, albeit in a very different context: deformance. McGann's first experience in deformance came when he and a friend accessed a digital copy of a Rosetti painting in Adobe Photoshop and "began filtering it in a series of playful and random ways" (McGann 2001:84). McGann describes a moment when "the arbitrary distortion had suddenly clarified a chromatic organization I had never noticed in the picture, familiar as it was" (McGann 2001:84). McGann goes on to reason that distortions, even random ones, can illuminate a work of art in fresh and critically valuable ways. When he applies this technique to literary works, McGann describes it as "a particular type

of performative and rhetorical operation" (McGann 2001:108).[4] "The distortions arrest our attention," he concludes,

> only because we already know the original, which comes back to us through them as if from an unimaginable world or point of view. Distortion and original stand in immediately dialectical relation to each other … In this respect the distortions suggest the usefulness of thinking about art—at any rate, certain art works—as if they were informed by an idea, or an inertia, that has not been exhausted in the executed fact of the work we think we have and we think we know.
>
> (McGann 2001:86-87)

Although he was not discussing theatre, McGann alludes to it with the use of the term "performative," and I believe his ideas can be applied directly to the case of the two *Lears*, where "distortion and original" stood in "dialectical relation to each other" for 158 years.

The idea of purposefully distorting Shakespeare's poetry upsets many scholars. The notion that, in doing so, one might somehow *improve* the original would strike them as manifest lunacy. But a look at Tate's Prologue shows this was precisely his intent:

> If then this Heap of Flow'rs shall chance to wear
> Fresh Beauty in the Order they now bear,
> Ev'n this Shakespear's Praise;
> (Tate 297)

That is: if *Lear* (the "Heap of Flow'rs") acquires new aesthetic value in its "Tatefied" form, it is a reflection of the value of the original. In the play's Dedicatory Epistle, Tate uses a different metaphor to make the same point: he calls Shakespeare's *Lear* "a Heap of Jewels, unstrung and unpolish't; yet so dazling in their Disorder, that I soon perceiv'd I had seiz'd a Treasure" (Tate

295). His revisions, which he goes on to describe, are designed to "string and polish" Shakespeare's "Treasure" for public presentation. Tate even hints at the element of randomness which would guide McGann's experiments when he opens his Prologue thus:

> Since by Mistakes your best Delights are made,
> (For ev'n your Wives can please in Masquerade)
> 'Twere worth our While t'have drawn you in this day
> By a new Name to our old honest Play;
> (Tate 297)

Tate's jest implies that it is the accidental transformation of old delights (ie. plays or wives) which yield new pleasures.

Of course, Tate's changes were far from random, as Maguire, Marsden and Dobson have all pointed out. Similarly, the deferential nods to Shakespeare are part of a deliberate process of authentication; Tate wanted the connection to be prominent in the minds of his spectators. Their positive reactions to the play's performances depended on a dual awareness of *Lear* the tragedy and *Lear* the happy history. As with McGann's deformative experiments, Tate's *Lear* commands attention "only because we already know the original" (McGann 2001:86) in its alternative form (ie. in print).

In fact, Tate may have gone a step further with his deformative techniques. In her essay *Three Versions of the Story of King Lear*, Dorothy E. Nameri makes a persuasive argument that Tate's revisions drew upon not only Shakespeare's text, but also on the text of Shakespeare's *source*, the anonymous *King Leir*. After proving that *King Leir* was still in print when Tate was writing, Nameri finds internal evidence in Tate's play which suggests direct connections between it and

Leir (Nameri 179-248). *King Leir* was not nearly as well known as Shakespeare's play, which would explain why Tate only associates himself explicitly with Shakespeare (deformance being ineffective if the source text is unknown). But Nameri cautiously suggests that the Prologue's reference to "our old honest Play" (Tate 297) may be an allusion for the literati, to acknowledge an association with *The True Chronicle History of King Leir*.[5] If this is the case, Tate is inviting privileged spectators to enjoy a second layer of deformative *frisson*.

Neither Tate's creative aims nor his spectators' responses can be adequately understood without acknowledging that *Lear* exists as *polytext*. As I related in Chapter One, 'polytext' is Joseph Grigley's term for an "ongoing … manifestation of textual appearances, *whether those texts are authorized or not*" (Grigley 176). Grigley goes on to chart out the "assemblage of texts" which form a literary work: "This formulation can be expressed in the equation

$$W \rightarrow T_1, T_2, T_3, \ldots T_N$$

Where W = work and T = text" (Grigley 176). He also acknowledges performance-based iterations of a work, using *The Tempest* as his example:

> *The Tempest* is a work, and a copy of the First Folio represents one text of that work. Nor is it necessary to exclude performances from this formulation. Where a series of performances is based on a specific text … we might say that
>
> $$T_X \rightarrow P_1, P_2, P_3, \ldots P_N$$
>
> (Grigley 176)

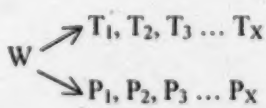
While Grigley's schema is a useful starting point, it oversimplifies many of the issues which affect the dynamic between text and performance. It implies that performances are always the outcome of texts, when in fact texts can sometimes

result from performance (eg. The so-called 'bad quartos'). It glosses over the modern method of preparing a text for production—a process involving cuts, alterations, and conflations which transform the text entirely (Worthen 1997:61-62). It assumes that a performance does not deviate from its textual source. And, most importantly for *Lear*, Grigley's equation relegates performance to a position of secondary authority beneath the text—a hierarchy which reflects contemporary scholarly thinking, but which fails to apprehend the pre-twentieth-century dynamic between page and stage.

Tate's play was a performance-based iteration of the *Lear* polytext, but throughout its age of popularity, it did not require a textual mediator to be considered a valid manifestation of the work. "Performance," writes W.B. Worthen, "had an independent tradition, and much of the Shakespearean performance in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries claimed to stage 'Shakespeare' precisely by violating the text" (Worthen 1997:28), as Tate did:

> Since performance was not seen to be sustained by its text, nor by a uniform relation to its author, the question of authenticity – if relevant at all – had to do with how the stage articulated its Shakespeare with the theatrical tastes of its audience … the stage was an independent site for the production of the work, not strictly bound to an 'interpretive' role.
>
> (Worthen 1997:28)

In this light, we must revise Grigley's schema, which situates the text as a compulsory mediator between a performance and a work. A new formula might look like this:



A work like *Lear* can therefore be seen to have two separate but concurrent chains of iterations which may or may not inform each other, but which occupy independent sites of cultural authority regardless of their interactions.

Nahum Tate's revised *Lear* endured precisely because Tate *did not* seek to depose Shakespeare's play. He rather sought to complement it within a cultural dynamic which saw print and performance not as competing sites of authority, nor as hierarchical components of an indivisible work, but as coexistent threads of a polytext—two sides of a single coin, carrying equal authority within their separate venues. Moreover, the Tate/Shakespeare schism persevered because of the deformative rewards that came to spectators who knew both versions. Thus, when Charles Lamb writes that Shakespeare's version "is beyond all art, as the tamperings with it show" (Lamb 15), he is not only locating Shakespeare's authority *as text* ("while we read it, we see not Lear, but we are Lear" [Lamb 14]), but he is also grudgingly admitting that Tate's "tamperings" have revealed, through deformation, the intellectual sublimity of that text. And, no matter how disdainfully Lamb treats Tate's play, his famous declaration that "the Lear of Shakespeare cannot be acted" (Lamb 14) has an implicit flip-side: the Lear of Tate *can*.

To accept that Tate relied upon *Lear's* polytextual nature for his play's success is not so difficult if one considers that his predecessor did almost exactly the same thing. Like Tate, Shakespeare adapted his *Lear* from a well-known dramatic source. Like Tate, he added characters and sub-plots, tuned the verse, and changed the play's familiar ending to serve the sensibilities of his

contemporaries. And, since *King Leir* (his source) had recently been published,[6] he was developing an equilibrium between the *Leir* of print and the *Lear* of performance—just like Tate. We do not tend to see the two creative acts as parallels—again, largely because of Shakespeare's blinding genius—but the fact is that Shakespeare and Tate were engaged in the same process, nudging prior iterations into new sites of authority as one strings jewels onto a necklace.

With the stability of the page/stage polytext explained, the historical question is not so much *what kept Tate on the stage for so long*, but rather *what changed to eject him from his place?* If the mutually authorized duality of Tate and Shakespeare's *Lears* kept readers and spectators absorbed for over a century, how was that equilibrium upset? We may seek a partial explanation in two areas: first, in the nature of deformance, and second, in a shift in the polytextual structure brought about by an increasingly popular *third* site of authority.

The deformative *frisson* of Tate's adaptation had most likely worn off by the 1760s. Deformance, as a means of understanding or appreciating a work of art, becomes redundant when the distortions it produces are as familiar as their source. After all, the value of deformance lies in its capacity to reveal that a work's potential "has not been exhausted in the executed fact of the work we think we have and we think we know" (McGann 2001:87). Nearly a century after Tate's adaptation debuted, both Tate and Shakespeare's versions had familiar, well-established roles in "the executed fact of the work." Tate's adaptation had, in effect, gone from redactionary—altering perceptions of *Lear's* meanings—to merely reactionary—affirming Shakespeare's place in print and its own place in

the theatre. If deformance was to play a further role in the evolution of *Lear*, it would have to come from a new source, or—as it happened—sources.

The performance history of *Lear* between 1756 and 1838 was characterized by a fervour for deformative experiments, the combined effect of which was to demolish the established equilibrium of Shakespeare and Tate. These "hybridized" performances probably began with David Garrick, although some scholars think George Colman was the first to start reintegrating Shakespeare onto the stage (see Harris 213-222). Garrick restored most of Shakespeare's first three acts, although he retained Tate's romantic sub-plot and followed Tate in eliminating the Fool. Acts Four and Five are largely Tate's, though he omits the "grotto scene" between Edmund and Regan. Garrick's final scene shifts back and forth between Tate and Shakespeare's language before finally choosing Tate's happy ending (Marsden 92). Colman (whose *Lear* played 1768-1773) favoured Shakespeare for the first four acts (minus the Fool), and he omitted the romantic sub-plot, but retained Tate's Act Five, happy ending and all (Marsden 93-94). John Kemble's *Lear* (1792-1823) took a step backwards, adopting a shorter version of Tate with only a few refinements from Garrick and Colman (Adler 53). In 1823, Edmund Kean was the first adaptor to use Shakespeare's tragic ending; but he kept the romance between Edgar and Cordelia, and he still omitted the Fool (Marsden 171). Finally, in 1838, William Charles Macready produced Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Fool and all; but even then, Macready "eliminated half the lines of Shakespeare's text, adapted the play to Victorian sensibilities, and retained Tate's reordering of the scenes of the last

three acts" (Adler 53). Watching these 'remixes' on stage would have been an exciting and suspenseful experience, since they presented material from two well-known *Lears* in unpredictable configurations. At the same time as they provided deformative rewards, the hybrids demonstrated that Shakespeare's *Lear* (or parts of it, at least) was not exclusively a textual event.. All it would take for the long-standing dialectic to dissolve would be a complementary demonstration that Tate's *Lear* was not exclusively theatrical.

Such a demonstration may be found in the appearance and popularity of the performance editions. These seemingly innocuous publications appeared at the same time as Garrick, Colman and others were producing their deformative adaptations. According to Laurie E. Osborne, the editions "were inspired in large measure by the renewed attention to Shakespeare in the theatre" (Obsorne 171-172), but they differed from other editions by delivering not Shakespeare but his hybridized offspring. The performance editions were created to resolve the increased overlap of performance and text, but they created an anxious third site of authority which, like the hybrid adaptations themselves, contributed to the collapse of *King Lear's* polytextual stability.

John Bell, whose 1773 anthology collected David Garrick's adaptations, reveals his anxiety in the General Introduction or Advertisement. There, he describes his work as "*a companion to the theatre*" (Bell 8) which exists so that "those who take books to the Theatre, will not be so puzzled themselves to accompany the speaker; nor so apt to condemn performers of being imperfect, when they pass over what is designedly omitted" (Bell 7). This noble aim reflects

a recent elision between the acts of reading and playgoing—recent in the case of *Lear*, at least, since no spectator would have brought a text to the theatre before 1756, when the book of *Lear* bore no resemblance to the play. Now, print versions were infiltrating performances, and carrying their textual authority along with them. Bell's goal was to resolve this new authoritative grey zone by delivering a version that served the authority of both text and performance.

He does this, in the Advertisement, in three stages: first, by endorsing the authority of the theatre; then, by retreating from a critical authority which clearly held more sway than his editions could assert; and finally, by insinuating that his editions are actually *better* than scholarly editions at approximating Shakespeare's intentions. He begins by acknowledging the Bard's imperfections and justifying corrective measures, much as Tate had done: "Why then should not the noble monuments he has left us, of unrivalled ability, be restored to due proportion and natural lustre, by sweeping off those cobwebs, and that dust of depraved opinion" (Bell 6). According to Bell, "the Theatres, especially of late, have been generally right in their omissions, of this author particularly" (6-7). But Bell (writing now on behalf of Garrick) fears that the authority of performance might be confused with the scholarly authority of print:

> This fear was, lest the prunings, transpositions, or other alterations, which, in his province as a manager he had often found necessary to make, or adopt, with regard to the text, for the convenience of representation, or accommodation to the powers and capacities of his performers, might be misconstrued into a critical presumption of offering to the literati a reformed and more correct edition of our author's works.
>
> (Bell 8)

Here Bell admits that his edition is not "correct" in the editorial sense; yet he has already "claim[ed] the primacy of the theatre to justify its textual variation" (Osborne 171). He concludes by asserting his text's superiority over verbose critical editions:

> We have earnestly consulted correctness, neatness, ornament, utility, and cheapness of price; we have avoided all ostentation of criticism, compacting our notes as much as possible … it has been our peculiar endeavour to render what we call *the essence of Shakespeare*, more instructive and intelligible.
>
> (Bell 9; italics mine)

The result is a new sort of hybrid, half-text and half-performance, drawing its authority from the theatre but functioning in the "instructive" capacity of a book. Referring back to the revised formula for Grigley's polytext, we might situate performance editions in between the threads of text and performance; we might inscribe them as subsidiaries to the thread of performance events; or they may require their own independent thread. In any event, they served to bring Tate into the world of print, just as the hybrids had brought Shakespeare back onto the stage. The balance of the two authoritative forms was irrevocably upset.

After Macready reinstated Shakespeare's *Lear* onstage in 1838, the need for performance editions dwindled,[7] and the two remaining authoritative threads became inseparable. By the twentieth century, a model akin to Grigley's had become accepted. Bibliographers vied for positions of cardinal textual authority, and theatre practitioners inherited validity through their associations with the texts rather than through any separate, localized process of authorization. In such a climate, Tate was understandably recast as a usurper; and Garrick, Colman, Kean *et al.* became (at worst) co-conspirators or (at best) repressed insurgents trying to

overthrow Tate's tyranny and restore Shakespeare's rightful place upon the stage. To all appearances, the age of adaptation ended with the nineteenth century, and modern audiences were made to feel closer to "the essence of Shakespeare" (Bell 9) because "while we feel free to alter Shakespeare's context, we do not change his text" (Marsden 2). Such appearances are false. Adaptation continues to be the norm, not the exception; and while there is certainly a great deal of concern about locating 'the essence of Shakespeare' through performance, there is no consensus to suggest that this proximity comes from the text.

W.B. Worthen defines "proximity" in performance as "an act of legitimation, a means of claiming 'something we value'—whoever the 'we,' whatever the 'value'—in theatrical terms." He goes on to note that "the conventional term for this 'proximity' in the theatre is 'fidelity,' and the contradictory ways in which stage productions are seen to be 'faithful' to a play dramatizes the extent to which the assertion of authority is a fully rhetorical act, absorbed in the register of ideology" (Worthen 1997:18). As we have seen, the ideology of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries maintained a schism between text and performance, so that textual fidelity was not an issue. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, fidelity in performance is still situated elsewhere:

> Few productions of a Shakespeare play scrupulously follow *any* single text of the play without emendation, adaptation, elimination, substitution, or addition of text; in many cases, actors and directors will clear up a problem in the script by referring to another edition of the play, without much regard to arcane editorial controversies.
> (Worthen 1997:62)

There is a tension, then, between the ideology of performance as deferential to text and the exigencies of theatrical practice. If 'fidelity' does not reside within the text, then where does it come from? And what function does it serve?

Scholars and practitioners variously situate fidelity within a play's genre, props, themes, or inherent logic. Jonathan Miller, who directed *King Lear* for the BBC's television series in 1982, argues that Shakespeare's plays are open to interpretation, with "the capacity to generate an almost infinite series of unforeseeable inflexions" (Miller 34-35). But he also admits that "they are not totally malleable" and that "common sense, tact and literary sensitivity *should* prevent the director or actor from introducing interpretations or versions of the play that are profoundly inconsistent with the range of meanings understood as constitutive of the play's genre" (Miller 35). By his definition, a play like *Lear* has fidelity so long as it remains within its genre—which may be 'history' or 'tragedy,' depending on whether one consults the Quarto or the Folio text. On the other hand, William Gaskill focuses not upon the genre, but upon the physical business of the play: "Shakespeare means the ghost of Hamlet's father to be in full armour, wearing the visor of his helmet up, with a silvery grey beard and walking slowly" (qtd. in Worthen 1997:52). Once such minutiae of costume, prop and manner have been altered, "the image has been changed but not the text so one contradicts the other" (qtd. in Worthen 1997:52), and fidelity is lost. Jackson G. Barry appears to cast his vote somewhere in between Miller and Gaskill when he writes that a production "may be taken as more or less fully realized and more or less correct in terms of the logic of the developing scene" (Barry 9). Benedict

Nightingale is much more specific when he observes "domestic, political and metaphysical" emphases in recent productions of *Lear*, and adds "The challenge is perhaps to embrace all three" (Nightingale 229). Here, fidelity arises from a conceptual balancing act which does not dwell on genre, props, or even logic.

To these diverse conceptions of fidelity (only one of which even refers to the text), we might contrast the radical aesthetic of Charles Marowitz, the Shakespearean iconoclast whose 'collage' productions 'recycle' works into forms not even Tate would recognize. Marowitz, like Miller, "takes the sign of a masterpiece to be its limitless *re*interpretability" (Worthen 1997:59), but unlike Miller, he does not see genre as a touchstone of fidelity (his productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merchant of Venice* were both scathing dramas). The closest analogue Marowitz offers is 'myth': "When one assembles a collage version of the play—or an anti-narrative gambol through its themes and issues—one reactivates the 'myth' in such a way that people are reminded of it again" (Marowitz 1991:19). Worthen reduces Marowitz's *myth* to mean *plot* (Worthen 1997:59), but a better synonym would be *archetype*. "There is a kind of cultural smear of Hamlet in our collective unconscious" writes Marowitz, "and we grow up knowing *Hamlet* even if we have never read it, never seen the film or attended any stage performance" (Marowitz 1991:19). The collages, then, are acts of deformance which affect us "because we already know the original, which comes back to us through them as if from an unimaginable world or point of view" (McGann 2001:86-87).

What separates Marowitz's definition of fidelity from all the others is his assumption that a proximity to 'the essence of Shakespeare' perpetually exists, and not in the text but in the collective unconscious. Seen in this light, the task of production does not involve transmitting the meaning of a work transparently to an audience. Instead, it involves resituating archetypal aspects of a play in ways which will remind the audience of their cultural relationship to the work. "What the poet can never provide is the social and historical ambience in which his work is being revived. As much as he may understand human nature and the complexities of the human soul, he cannot foresee the priorities and preoccupations of future generations" (Marowitz 1986:5). The director, actor, or adaptor must therefore disengage with traditional conceptions of fidelity long enough to address these social and historical issues. He must deform the work, so that audiences may recognize it in a new context. In a modern ideology, where performance authority defers to textual authority, that act of disengagement is an act of treason. Yet it is a necessary one, if the performative event is going to resonate with its contemporary audiences. Paradoxically, "it is through a classic's imaginative metamorphosis that its eternal verities shine through" (Marowitz 1991:7).

Marowitz's radical philosophy describes theatrical production as the execution of a series of *unauthorized but valid* iterations of a work—*unauthorized* because theatre deforms its texts, but *valid* in that those deformances bring spectators in contact with archetypal aspects of the work, and make them relevant in new sociocultural contexts. Tate clearly validated his revisions in this way, by

emphasizing the recuperative aspects of deformance (polishing the "Heap of Jewels") and by changing *Lear* into a shape that would resonate with Restoration audiences. The creators of the hybridized *Lears* had similar agendas, producing startling new versions of familiar works to suit the changing tastes of theatregoers. Even John Bell's performance editions incorporate the spirit of deformance while aiming to fulfill a new cultural need (the need to be 'on book' in the theatre). One can go on to apply Marowitz's manifesto to contemporary adaptations of *King Lear*. For example, when Edward Bond wrote *Lear* (1971) he did so "as a counter to Shakespeare who, he felt, was in effect promoting a resigned despair in a world that demanded revolutionary action" (Nightingale 231). And Akira Kurosawa's film *Ran* (1985), which adapts much of *Lear's* plot but changes the setting and the language, appeals to Western viewers due to its "capacity to reveal a historical similarity and variance: to find a Shakespearean sense of doom in the other, remote, and apparently alien historical place" (Jan Kott, qtd. in Marowitz 1991:6). In both cases, the new works deform, respond to, and ultimately reveal more about their source by placing *Lear* in a different cultural context.

The true test of Marowitz's vision comes when one applies it not to radical revisions such as these, but to a 'traditional' or 'faithful' adaptation of *King Lear*. Even when a production takes pains to maintain fidelity in all its aforementioned forms, it still disengages from its source and becomes its own iteration of the work. This is Grace Ioppolo's argument in her essay "The Performance of Text in the Royal National Theatre's 1997 Production of *King Lear*." Ioppolo studies the

process by which director Richard Eyre set out to use the Folio text of *Lear* exclusively, but "eventually found himself conflating it with the Quarto, partly because he could not resist using Quarto-only material" (Ioppolo 185). The production remained extraordinarily loyal to the play's language, and would have satisfied Gaskill and Barry's parameters for fidelity "in its insistence that actors use dialogue as stage directions and thereby act out the literal meanings of the words" (Ioppolo 186). It even came close to encompassing Nightingale's thematic trinity, in that one reviewer read it as "a moral and political anatomy lesson" (Billington, qtd. in Ioppolo 185), while Ioppolo herself saw it as "more interested in a particular family than in general humanity" (Ioppolo 185).

Considering the production's gestures of fidelity and its reliance upon a single text (the Folio) for 90 per cent of its material, Ioppolo's conclusion seems shocking: "In the end, what is clear is that Eyre's text of *King Lear* is *his* text; he has authored it and is its creator" (Ioppolo 191). Equally remarkable are the comments of reviewers, who suggest that Eyre's production felt both *old* and *new* at once—that it "makes you feel anew the surprising developments of Shakespeare's thought in every word, and yet makes these sound spontaneous, new-minted" (Macaulay, qtd. in Ioppolo 184-185). These comments register the successful juxtaposition of 'timeless' archetypes with modern sensibilities—the same dynamic Marowitz pursues in his radical adaptations. The fact that Ioppolo would label Eyre the author and creator of his *Lear* after he altered less than 200 lines suggests that Eyre was engaged in the same adaptive process as Marowtiz—adapting not as radically, perhaps, but adapting all the same. Ioppolo ascribes the

production's success to Eyre's "textual reshapings," and concludes that "the play has no *final* form but always an intermediate one, dangerous or not" (Ioppolo 191-192). Production, therefore, is *by definition* a process of adaptation; and the process may connote a sense of danger, but continually yields new deformative rewards.

We tend to think of adaptation and performance history as separate stories. Adaptation is a muddy river whose textual silt often clouds the waters of performance, even as the two streams stalwartly refuse to merge. Jackson G. Barry tries to reconcile the cross currents:

> First, we allowed above for a class of *adaptations*, plays based on another play, perhaps using most of the situation and dialogue from the original but deviating from this enough so that it is in effect a different play. The adaptation may be better or worse than the original—as *King Lear* was better than *King Leir*, and Nahum Tate's *King Lear* was worse than Shakespeare's—but it cannot be condemned for "distorting" an original which it is—perhaps mistakenly—not trying to follow.
> (Barry 10)

This distinction helps Barry when he visits the theatre. Should he witness a version of *Lear* which contains some surprises, Barry's system gives him the security—the authority—of distinguishing a valid distortion (ie. an adaptation) from an "incorrect production" (Barry 10). What Barry fails to realize is that the streams have never been separate—not in Tate's time nor in Garrick's time, and certainly not in our time. If Barry had attended the 1997 Royal National Theatre production of *King Lear*, he would have seen a tremendously faithful production of Shakespeare's play which retained "most of the situation and dialogue from the original" but deviated from it just enough to become "in effect a different play"

(Barry 1999: 10). By Barry's own definition, all performances are adaptations. And while some adaptations, such as Tate's, may find themselves repudiated when compared to other iterations, Barry is correct that none should be condemned for their distortions. It is the nature of performance to distort. And just as each performance strives to string the jewels of past performances together, the single stream of adaptation constantly unearths new pearls to be added to the pile.

Chapter Three
The Great Stage of Fools

Kent: Where learnt you this, fool?
Fool: Not i'th'stocks, fool.
(*King Lear* 2.4.84-85)

In "Laughing in his Face: Australia's Shakespeares," Philippa Kelly quotes an amusing incident in early antipodean performance. Her source is the *Sydney Morning Herald's* review of "Australia's very first performance of *King Lear*" (Kelly 40), dated January 26, 1837:

> In the last scene – which was the author's, not Tate's alteration – [when] Mr Knowles came on bearing the *dead* body of Cordelia (Mrs Cameron), an awkward circumstance occurred…Mr Knowles could get no further than the words, 'Howl, howl!' when *dead* Cordelia, 'perforce', laughed in his face!
>
> (qtd. in Kelly 40)

Far from seeking to conceal this colonial embarrassment, Kelly uses the "relatively trivial incident of the laughing Cordelia" as a springboard for "complex questions" about post-colonial interpretations of Shakespeare and the postmodern evocation of "a decanonised Bard, a ludic and transgressive deconstruction of our times" (Kelly 41-42). Of course, she does not assume that "Mrs. Cameron" had such transgressions in mind when she inadvertently "corpsed" (as acting slang would have it). Nor does she suggest that Shakespeare ever dreamed of such a moment. The "laughing Cordelia" incident is an unauthorized event, a breach of a tradition which insists that Lear re-enter in Act 5, Scene 3 with his daughter dead and silent in his arms. No one would imagine otherwise.

By basing her critique on such an event, Kelly suggests that on occasion, random episodes in performance tradition can yield unexpected insights (about the play or, in this case, about the tradition). Other scholars have made similar use of bizarre theatrical anecdotes. Consider, for example, Stephen Booth's use of the "Get-Ready Man" story as an epigraph to *King Lear, Macbeth, Indefinition, and Tragedy*. This is a lengthy quotation from James Thurber's *My Life and Hard Times* which describes the Get-Ready Man as "a lank unkempt elderly gentleman with wild eyes and a deep voice" (qtd. in Booth 3) who interrupts a performance of *King Lear* with shouted declarations of immanent apocalypse. Or, as a simpler example, consider my own use of the "Take 'em both!" anecdote in the Introduction to this paper. Such stories have a strangely reassuring effect upon a reader familiar with *King Lear*. It is a tiny act of deformance, momentarily refracting the familiar image of the play so that we can see the normative experience afresh. That is, our understanding of Shakespeare's *King Lear* is enhanced by being shown one example of what the play is *not*. Thus, while Kelly works to turn Cordelia's laughter "from embarrassing to productive transgression" (Kelly 41), it remains a transgression, and the familiar work remains itself.

However, underneath this reassurance runs a counter-current: scholarly anxiety about the aleatory nature of performance. As soon as a Shakespearean play is staged, it becomes unstable; the text, comparatively fixed upon the page, becomes vulnerable to missed cues, skipped lines, improvisations, and interruptions. Even if the words are all where they belong, the performing body

may betray its owner, its "recalcitrant physiology break[ing] through in perspiration, vocal congestion, a cough, an itch" (Garner, Jr. 1994:44)—the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to. Compounding this anxiety is a truth which few textual scholars have the courage to face: a great deal of the action in Shakespeare's plays is unwritten, and subject to the discretion of its actors. Taken to an extreme, the laughing Cordelia exposes a discomfiting loophole in the texts of *King Lear*, which do not explicitly say *not* to laugh. When viewed as a set of instructions for performance, Shakespeare's plays seem woefully inadequate—they are riddled with what Philip C. McGuire calls "open silences" (McGuire 133).

Peter Brook, who directed the now-legendary Beckett-inspired *King Lear* of 1962, believes that incomplete instructions are the hallmark of a great playwright:

> Some writers attempt to nail down their meaning and intentions in stage directions and explanations, yet we cannot help being struck by the fact that the best dramatists explain themselves the least. They recognize that further indications will most probably be useless. They recognize that the only way to find the true path to the speaking of a word is through a process that parallels the original creative one.
>
> (Brook 13)

Yet in many scholars' eyes, this permissiveness towards interpretation leads to mutiny and anarchy. Disparaging modern interpretive techniques (such as the Stanislavskian "Method"), Maynard Mack writes, "Subtext easily becomes a substitute for text … The most obvious result of subtextualizing is that the director and (possibly) actor are encouraged to assume the same level of authority as the author" (Mack 33). There is a muted horror in Mack's parenthetical

"possibly" which hints at the degree of harm he sees in such a notion. Mack believes the actor, given an inch of creative ground, will take a mile, and begin to rewrite the play—through action when he must, and improvisation when he can.

Mack's fear is justified, and his whispered "possibly" is amplified in all performances to a resounding "Yes!" All actors are improvisers in the sense that they must necessarily elaborate upon the incomplete instructions in the text; and all performances are mutinous in that they disengage with textual authority, just as adaptors and directors do when choosing a performance script. Like the adaptors, actors transcend this breach of authority by establishing an equilibrium—a balance, in the actor's case, between mimesis and performativity. This equilibrium, with its attendant improvisations, is permitted by the medium of theatre, and is even celebrated by the audience who view it as a balancing act between character and performer. An exploration of this process, focusing upon the challenges inherent in a single character from *Lear*, will demonstrate how modern acting embodies an authoritative paradox as old as performance itself.

The character I have chosen as the subject for this study is not the "poor fool" Cordelia, who (laughing or silent) is hanged in Act 5, but instead Lear's other Fool, who exercises a tremendous influence upon the play's tone until his disappearance in Act 3. Although I will refer to other interpretations of the Fool, my study will predominantly follow one in particular—Antony Sher's, in Adrian Noble's 1982 RSC production—because Sher's is the most thoroughly documented account of the role to date. This chapter will examine the ways in which the "fool" archetype metonymically reflects all dramatic characterisation

and also explore some of the metaphors which are habitually aimed at the acting profession.

In *Merely Players?,* Jonathan Holmes describes "a tripartite pattern" of characterisation undergone by many actors playing Shakespearean fools and clowns: "First, an actor worries about being funny (or not), then they discover that conventional modes of characterisation do not apply, and finally they develop a highly physical characterisation often involving a degree of 'business'" (Holmes 23). By his own account (as published in *Players of Shakespeare 2*), Antony Sher underwent a similar journey when interpreting Lear's Fool. His two basic problems, as he describes them, were: "What *character* to give the Fool, and how to make him *funny*" (Sher 153). The first problem (which Holmes ranks second) is, according to Sher, a symptom of the fact that "Shakespeare doesn't give us any clues as to his *character*—his background, his appearance, his age" (Sher 153). To this, I would add that the lack of a reliable performance tradition greatly complicates attempts to circumscribe the Fool. Sher ascribes the problem of humour to the fact that "it is also the clown's *function* which has become outdated" (Sher 153)—a statement which provokes an inquiry into the role of fools in Shakespeare's time as well as in the present. Sher also writes at length about the "sudden and inexplicable disappearance of the Fool" (Sher 162) and provides some validation for his unorthodox solution chosen for the 1982 production. These three issues—lack of context, function, and the Fool's final exit—have sufficient depth to warrant individual concern.

Sher is correct that the Fool lacks a biographical background, but this in itself is not unusual for a Shakespearean character. What distinguishes this role the most is its chaotic performance tradition. All of Shakespeare's plays suffered what John Meagher calls a "discontinuity" (Meagher 31) in their performance traditions when the theatres were closed between 1642 and 1660. But the Fool's exile from the stage was much longer, because he did not appear in Tate's adaptation, nor in the hybridized performances which followed.[8] In fact, the Fool was one of the last elements of Shakespeare's play to be restored to the stage, and when he returned, he did so in an unlikely form: enacted by a "young and pretty" actress, Priscilla Horton (Foakes 52). This was clearly not Shakespeare's intention for the role, since there were no female actors in his time.[9] Nonetheless, the casting choice had an impact upon performance tradition, and female Fools are still seen in modern productions (eg. Emma Thompson, Renaissance Theatre Company, 1990; and Linda Kerr Scott, RSC, 1990). Other recent Fools confirm, however, that there is no single "traditional" representation of the character: he has been "an old, battered, world-weary man" (in Jonathan Miller's 1989 production), "a scrofulous, prematurely aged figure" (Trevor Nunn, 1976), a "dour and lugubrious" scarecrow (David Hare, 1986), a "thin, bent young man" with a shaved head (Adrian Noble, 1993-4), a campy drag queen (Max Stafford-Clark, 1993), and even "an androgynous human puppet, shiny, angular, and tiny enough to be picked up and hung squeaking off a hook when he/she irritated Lear" (Nicholas Hytner, 1990) (Nightingale 230-240). One need only glance at the performance traditions of other Shakespearean clowns to see how remarkably

protean the Fool has become—and how he "breaks out of every category in which he might be fixed" (Booth 39).

Intimidated, perhaps, by such a legacy, Sher sought inspiration for the character outside its performance tradition, and indeed outside the play itself. His "first breakthrough" in characterisation came when he adopted a strictly physical approach, modeling his movements and vocalisations upon an animal instead of a man:

> I chose a chimpanzee, chattering and clapping hands, hurling myself around in forward rolls, and found this very liberating for the role. That weekend I hurried to London Zoo to watch the chimps and became even more convinced that they had all the requisite qualities for the Fool—manic comic energy when in action, a disturbing sadness when in repose.
> (Sher 154-155)

W.B. Worthen makes much out of the fact that Sher looked beyond Shakespeare's text for the key to his character: "Sher inhabits himself and the Fool differently, not through the umbilical connection to the author, but by acting against the grain—of the self, of the text, of Shakespeare" (Worthen 1997:147). Jonathan Holmes, responding to Worthen's comments, points out that animal characterisation is a very common acting technique, often taught in drama schools. He writes, "the objective of the exercise is not to move the characterisation away from the human but, perversely, to anthropomorphise the animal and then psychologise it, finding yourself in the object, rather than the animal in yourself" (Holmes 21-22). Both Holmes and Worthen agree that Sher's animal-based characterisation is unbounded by Shakespeare; it represents a

moment of subjugating both text and tradition to a process of mimetic self-discovery.

When Sher chose a chimpanzee to emulate, however, he was unconsciously containing his performance in a tradition much older and broader than *Lear's*—a tradition that can be charted through a chain of (sometimes unfortunate) metaphors for acting. Of course, "to ape" means to act, to imitate mimetically. But the primate metaphor has a more specific tie to the history of jesters and fools. Sher suggests the connection once again when (having set the chimp characterisation aside) he adopts "a crippled clown" approach to the Fool, based upon an entry which he found by chance in a medieval chronology: "Court jesters (dwarfs, cripples) appear in Europe" (qtd. in Sher 156). Historically, the tradition of the court jester emerged from "the custom of keeping natural fools or dwarfs" for entertainment—a tradition which itself "may be traced back to Roman times, when people sometimes kept monstrous imbeciles as pets *much as ladies of a later day kept monkeys*" (Goldsmith 5; italics mine). This comparison, dehumanising though it may be, helps to explain the appeal of handicapped or mentally retarded jesters: like pet monkeys, they appeared to their masters as imitations of normative human behaviour. That day in the London Zoo, Sher was not simply aping an ape; he was aping a long tradition of mimetic perception.

Furthermore, the tradition of the natural fool may be seen as the originating site for the cultural position of "actor" in general. Robert Goldsmith believes that, even though the status of the natural fool was no better than an animal's, the social role still attracted those who were eager to audition:

> The natural fool or idiot was tolerated and was allowed a measure of freedom not permitted the other lower domestics. The freedom to indulge in wanton talk, truth-telling, and parody proved an incentive strong enough to enlist many perfectly sane men in the ranks of counterfeit fools.
>
> (Goldsmith 6)

Out of this practice came the "itinerant jester or *joculator*," minstrels and story-tellers—in a word, performers—of the middle ages who "were willing to assume the guise of innocents and naturals" (Goldsmith 7). When the tradition of traveling performers merged with the tradition of urban cycle dramas in the sixteenth century, the modern "actor" began to emerge, and fools remained centre stage. According to Meredith Anne Skura, "the Clown was the archetypal actor" (Skura 57):

> As theater was to society and the player to the theater, the Clown was to the player: the epitome of everything lawless and base. To insult a player, his enemies called him a clown—an "antic," said Greene; a "fool," said Nashe; "a motley to the view," said Shakespeare. He embodied the "aberrant impulse."
>
> (Skura 57)

From this perspective, acting is a tradition emerging from the social function of the natural fool—an "innocent" who apes whatever he or she observes, and who metonymically conveys, through an aberrant physical or mental state, an "aberrant impulse" in society.

The metaphor of the natural fool, who knows nothing yet speaks wisdom, still clings to the acting profession today. Outsiders and practitioners alike describe the actor's process of characterisation in terms of intuition and happenstance, not skill and technique. Peter Brook writes that "Outstanding actors, like all real artists, have some mysterious psychic chemistry, half

conscious and yet three-quarters hidden, that they themselves may only define as 'instinct', 'hunch', 'my voices', that enables them to develop their vision and their art" (Brook 29). The *Players of Shakespeare* series, according to its editor, presents actorial decisions as "instinctively made, perceptions unconsciously arrived at, fine discriminations mysteriously achieved" (Brockbank 3). In such a context, it makes sense that Sher found his Fool—and the pre-Shakespearean traditions that accompany it—not through text-based characterisation, but through a combination of instinct (selecting a chimpanzee as his physical model) and luck (happening upon a medieval chronology that mentioned court jesters). Perhaps all actors have an element of the natural fool within them, embodying illogic and the "aberrant impulse," yet reflecting the audience mimetically back to themselves.

Such a classification serves to stabilise actors' authority, in the sense that it circumscribes their anarchic nature within the "carnivalesque" site of performance. It also obviates the threat of improvisation or textual deviance. At first glance, it may seem as though a stage full of natural fools is an unlikely site for textual fidelity—after all, the "all-licensed fool" (*Lear* 1.4.191) speaks his mind above all. However, the notion of actors as "touched" or gifted fools also associates them with the idiot savant who can speedily memorize, and flawlessly recall, huge tracts of information. The best actors are, in this view, those who can regurgitate their texts most accurately and without artifice—an empty vessel passively receiving and signifying a perfect and pre-existing character. From this perspective, the business of characterisation—Sher's external physicalisations, for example—are simply the antics which a spectator must tolerate from gifted but

demented actors in order to receive the coveted text. The problem with this attitude (besides its disrespect of actors' skills) concerns the fact that the history of performance underwent a critical phase of 'artifice' at the time of Shakespeare's writings. This phase, characterised by the clown or "artificial fool," informs Sher's second quandary: how to make Lear's Fool *funny*.

"I've always found Shakespeare's clowns the least funny characters imaginable," writes Sher:

> To some extent this is because a lot of their humour has not aged well, the jokes and puns have become very obscure … and [are] not easily accessible to a modern audience. However, it is also the clown's *function* which has become outdated. Modern audiences find humour in the most unlikely places; they want humour to surprise them.
>
> (Sher 153-154)

Sher goes on to compare two comic characters from *Twelfth Night*, concluding that modern audiences resist the drollery of the clown Feste, but enjoy the "straight-man" humour of Malvolio. Since Malvolio was unquestionably crafted to be laughed at, Sher's problem does not seem to be with Shakespeare's sense of humour in general, but specifically with his *self-consciously* funny characters. Jonathan Holmes echoes this concern when he observes that clown roles are "consistently problematic roles for actors searching for interiority" (Holmes 16). The source of the difficulty becomes clear when clown roles are interpreted exclusively through the filter of the natural fool; it is a paradox to practice self-consciousness when one is *unconsciously* channeling a role. One cannot, on the face of it, be simultaneously comedian and character.

Yet this process of self-division is exactly what the clowns of Shakespeare seem to demand of actors. In her brilliant study *Shakespeare the Actor and the Purposes of Playing*, Meredith Anne Skura begins by delineating the two fundamental aspects of acting: "The first is mimesis or roleplaying; the second is performance, establishing a 'real' relation to an audience" (Skura 9). Clown characters, she goes on to note, relied predominantly upon the performative aspect:

> The Clown was the player closest to the nonmimetic roots of theater in ritual celebrations, popular pastimes, and folk tradition … the Clown engaged the audience directly, whether to gather the crowds as clowns had done for road shows, to tell them about the action, or to cover for actors who missed their cues. He also played himself.
>
> (Skura 58)

Thus, comic actors such as Will Kemp and Robert Armin "occupy a place in the history of acting that Burbage, significantly, does not" (Holmes 25): they played themselves, and their popularity stemmed not from their ability to generate or channel characters, but from the performative relationship which they established with their audiences.

This is not to suggest that when Armin played Feste or Touchstone or Lear's Fool he was somehow separate from the action of the play. "The fools in the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries are characters in the plot, not irrelevant entertainers who wander across the stage at will" (Goldsmith 41). But the clown's purpose exceeded that of a mere dramatic functionary. "If the audience is restive, then it is obviously more important to holler at the trouble makers—or improvise a gag—than to try to preserve the unity of style of the

scene" (Brook 66). Once again, the spectre of improvisation arises, this time in conjunction with the modern conception of Shakespeare's clown actors as being "at liberty to redefine [their] role in performance" (Holmes 25). Obviously, an actor with that power (whether authorized or not) is behaving well beyond the boundaries of the natural fool. He is, in fact, an artificial fool—not only in the traditional sense of the word (ie. "artifice" or skill), but also in that he is counterfeiting. Like the *joculators* who feigned a handicap to gain employment, the performative clown assumes a mimetic role within the drama—but he does so with a conscious wink to the audience, who know that he is only shamming, and can drop in and out of character at any time.

The presence of a self-conscious artificial fool onstage energizes many aspects of playgoing experience for both actors and audiences. It provides a meta-narrative that can either relieve or augment the tension of the primary narrative event. It also creates an exciting uncertainty, because neither the spectators nor the fool's fellow actors know when or how he will disrupt the narrative. This excitement is augmented for the audience by the fact that much of Shakespeare's dialogue is designed to simulate improvisation—what Jane Freeman calls "scripted improvisation"—so spectators can never tell for sure which words are the playwrights', and which come from the fool. "Instead of regarding scripted drama and improvisation as two completely discrete categories," Freeman believes they belong along a continuum, "for Shakespeare's scripted improvisation is both modeled on and a model of the extemporaneous dialogue of actual improvisation" (Freeman 247). The blurred boundaries between script and

improvisation, as personified in the natural and artificial fools, gave Shakespeare no end of inspiration, and plays like *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* are replete with competitions between "fools" and those who are "wise enough to play the fool" (*Twelfth Night* 3.1.60). The same blurred boundaries provide the humorous inversion which concludes Kent and the Fool's banter in Act 2, Scene 4 (see the epigraph to this chapter).

The tension between natural and artificial fools also lies at the very heart of the challenging persona of Lear's Fool. Sher's two "basic problems" with the Fool—"what *character* to give the Fool, and how to make him *funny*" (Sher 153)—are essentially simplified expressions of the same tension: how to make the Fool *mimetically resemble a human being*, and how to make him *engage performatively with the audience*. The chaotic performance tradition of Lear's Fool may be seen as a fluctuation between these two extremes (although this, too, is over-simplifying). Thus, to Anthony Dawson, the Fool is interpretable as either "a waiflike boy, half seer and half idiot," or an "older and wilier" jester with a "bitter but therapeutic skill" in taunting (Dawson 188) that belies a keen awareness of his target audience (ie. Lear).

The same tension is even bound up within the texts of *Lear* themselves. Robert Hornback believes that "The *Lear* Quarto and Folio not only encode the distinguishing characteristics of the two Renaissance fool types but, in so doing, they also reflect two distinct theatrical trends" (Hornback 311). Scrutinizing the alterations to the Fool's lines between Q and F, Hornback concludes that the Quarto Fool is consistently characterised as an artificial fool (Robert Armin's

specialty); that the part "was revised for another actor following Armin's retirement" in 1613 (Hornback 313), and that the revised Folio Fool reflects a renewed popular interest in the natural type of fool. If Hornback is correct, then traditional conflated editions of *Lear* have been unwittingly combining two often contradictory characterisations—a discovery which may explain a great deal of the difficulty actors have encountered with the role.

But the complex dynamic between mimesis and performativity goes beyond the Fool—indeed, beyond fools of all humours—to approach the broader issue of authority in performance. Skura maintains that, despite shifting cultural and historical predilections, "theater always involves both mimesis and performance" (Skura 9). This is true, but our cultural biases determine which end of the spectrum authority will ultimately rest upon. The finest analysis of these authoritative "paradigm shifts" can be found in Philip C. McGuire's *Speechless Dialect.* Basing his analysis on theories of Newtonian and quantum physics, McGuire defines three extant critical perspectives of performance. First, the "thema of simplicity" positions the text as a play's "underlying principle of order" which will, when properly interpreted, "determine what happens each time the play is performed" (McGuire 126-127). Second, the "thema of completeness" operates from the basic assumption that the text of a play is "a statement of theory and creates the expectation that there is or must be a one-to-one correspondence between each physical detail of every performance and an element in the theory" (McGuire 132). Third, the "thema of causality encourages us to think of the playtext as the initial state of that artistic system which is the play, and to regard

performances as developments of that primary state" (McGuire 132). These themata (which contain echoes of many of the theories I have previously explored) reflect a concern with the relationship between acting and performing, but they position the relative authority of mimesis and performance in slightly different ways.

The "thema of simplicity" is a conservative perspective which all but eclipses performative authority in order to scrutinize the playtext. It has among its proponents the print-focused scholars discussed in Chapter 1, whose search for the Shakespearean fabula precludes the authority of all stage events which do not derive from the text. By contrast, adherents to the "thema of completeness" acknowledge performance, but with a heavily mimetic slant. Spontaneous performative gestures—physical details with no correspondence to the text—are thus deemed either "trivial" or "invalid" (McGuire 132). Chapter 2 saw examples of this perspective, especially in Miller, Gaskill, and Barry's conceptions of theatrical fidelity. Scholars who support this approach to performance studies tacitly promote the conception of the actor as natural fool or empty vessel. The "thema of causality" may be broad enough to encompass the adaptive philosophies of a Tate or a Marowitz, if one can accept the original playtext as "the determining cause for each and for all of the individual events that together constitute a particular performance" (McGuire 133). This thema grants the most authority to performative gestures, because it recognizes an "artistic system" (McGuire 132) which includes not only actors, but also actors interacting with spectators. However, McGuire admits that even within this liberal thema, there is

always the potential for a charge "of failure to respect the play itself" (McGuire 133). All three traditional codes of stage authority evince the scholar's fear of performative intrusions and the improvisational mode of the artificial fool.

McGuire's focus in *Speechless Dialect* leads him to postulate a fourth perspective on theatrical authority which helps to resolve the tension between mimetic and performative actorial techniques. He examines "the open silences of Shakespeare's plays" (McGuire 133)—ambiguous moments as in 5.3.308, when Lear says "Pray you, undo this button" to an unspecified attendant:

> Individually and collectively, these silences challenge us to come to terms with the freedom, with the capacity for sometimes conflicting multiplicity, that they help to generate and to which they mutely testify. No mode of analysis that takes the words of a Shakespearean playtext (or, in such cases as *King Lear*, playtexts) as its exclusive point of reference will be adequate to meet that challenge.
>
> (McGuire 122)

His solution takes the form of a "principle of superposition" which seeks to validate actors' methods of dealing with the incomplete instructions of the text. This principle will serve as a useful framework for examining Antony Sher's final and most controversial decision in interpreting Lear's Fool.

The Fool's abrupt and unexplained disappearance following Act 3, Scene 6 of *King Lear* is a significant silence if ever there was one. Sher was acquainted with scholarly explanations of a formalistic bent ("His function—both as a dramatic device and as a companion to Lear—is coming to an end" [Sher 162]), as well as those which consider the performance traditions of the play ("One popular theory is that in the original production the same actor would have been playing both the Fool and Cordelia and was required to prepare for the latter role

after the hovel scene" [Sher 162]). Unsatisfied with these theories (which gave him neither a character-based motivation nor any opportunity for a performative "farewell"), Sher and director Adrian Noble chose an unconventional approach following a rehearsal of the Fool's last scene. Sher describes the rehearsal as "wild and dangerous," with actors "seeking to release the lunacy, panic, and desperation" (Sher 162-163) that their characters were feeling:

> I grabbed a pillow, jumped in the oil drum and proceeded to 'anatomize' it savagely. The next time we ran through the scene I happened to be already holding the pillow when that line occurred, so this time [Michael] Gambon attacked it himself with his knife, hacking and stabbing. Afterwards we cautiously discussed the possibility of Lear stabbing through the pillow and accidentally killing the Fool.
>
> (Sher 163)

Sher ultimately defends the choice as a "valid" and "uncontrived explanation for the Fool's disappearance" (Sher 163). Anthony Dawson, on the other hand, dismisses Sher's choice as a "a capricious way to account for the curious disappearance of the Fool" (Dawson 188). The words used by these two writers, one an actor and the other a scholar, demonstrate the tension between McGuire's themata. Was the death of Sher's Fool at the hands of his master a "capricious" act which contravenes the thema of completeness by failing to account for itself within the playtext? Or was it a justifiable and "valid" choice, arising naturally from the playtext's range of possibilities in accordance with the thema of causality?

McGuire's "principle of superposition" would seem to suggest that it is both. McGuire introduces his "new ontology" as one which "allows us to conceive of the relationship among a Shakespearean play, its playtext(s), and its

performances in ways that accommodate rather than deny freedom and multiplicity" (McGuire 138). "A play," he expands, "does not exist in a single mode … but as an ensemble of various possibilities that may overlap and even conflict with one another" (McGuire 138):

> A Shakespearean playtext, like the probability wave associated with an electron, permits us to form expectations about what will happen during a performance—expectations, not certainties. Although it is highly probable that the audience at the next performance of *King Lear* will see Kent undo Lear's button, it is by no means certain…
>
> (McGuire 139)

Likewise, while it is highly probable that audiences of *Lear* will *not* see Lear accidentally stab his Fool, it is nonetheless a possibility—and, in Adrian Noble's production, it becomes an actuality. In McGuire's ontology, a Shakespearean playtext contains statements which merely "specify what *cannot* happen, and in doing so they permit whatever possibilities are not prohibited" (McGuire 139). Sher's choice is, therefore, "valid" because it is not explicitly prohibited. However, it may also be seen as "capricious" because it deliberately places itself in conflict with an audience's expectations of the scene. But this is not a fault; as we have already seen with deformative adaptations, it is often illuminating when a familiar artistic event is unexpectedly transformed. More significantly, the superposition of the "valid" and "capricious" images effect upon the audience "a kind of binocular vision" (States 8) which merges acting and performing into one phenomenal event.

When spectators attend a play, they watch two stories simultaneously: the fictional story of the play, as mimetically enacted by the actors, and the "real life"

story of the actors performing heroic feats of physical and vocal expertise upon the stage. The phenomenologist Bert O. States places these two seemingly contradictory perspectives at the very heart of the theatrical experience: "The inevitable starting point of any discussion of the actor's presence on the stage is the fact that we see him as both character and performer" (States 119). States acknowledges that actors are engaged in a complex process of textual interpretation—and, like McGuire, he is inclined to define the playtext "as an exercise for realizing the possibilities of the actor" (States 129). However, for States, the success of the actor's craft lies not in how faithfully he interprets the text, nor in how he might seek to disengage from that text. The success lies in the equilibrium between the two—interpretation (or mimesis) and improvisation (or performativity)—*as granted by the audience* in "the complex act of seeing and hearing the actor as a kind of healthy schizophrenic who is living two lives at the same time" (States 14). In other words, an actor's choices can be neither "valid" nor "capricious" until received by an audience, at which point they become both at once. The final exit of Sher's Fool was a successful moment in the phenomenology of performance because it was perceived as both a plausible characterisation and a deliberate transgression from the text. In its open silence and momentary deformance, it credibly fulfilled the audience's need to see both character and actor, superimposed in one time and body.

The phenomenological dialectic has a strong correlation to the two unruly primogenitors of modern theatre, the natural and artificial fools. The idiot savant traits of the natural fool epitomize the characterisational traits of modern

"Method" actors who claim to "forget themselves" or disappear inside their roles. Metaphorically, they are "apes," devoid of individual personae, characterised only through their recollection of the text. By contrast, the artificial fool is akin to the self-conscious actor who is "merely playing," pretending to go along with the illusion in order to mock or manipulate it to his own ends. Such performers are like thieves, in the sense that Ellen Terry suggests when she advises actors to "steal the words, steal the thought, and convey the stolen treasure to others with great art" (qtd. in Sniden 1980: 86). Terry's metaphor expresses the deceptive nature of this form of acting: one is trying to appear as someone else, rather than "becoming" that character. The audience's thrill of superposition comes from the fact that they never know *which fools are which*—that a natural fool may unexpectedly reveal himself as an artificial one, or an artificial fool may forget himself, and slip into the mode of a natural fool. Hornback's theories of revision notwithstanding, Lear's Fool is a rich, rewarding character precisely because he is *both* natural and artificial fool. In Act 3, Scene 6 alone, he vacillates between childish rhymes and riddles—"Prithee, nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman?" (3.6.9-10)—and illusion-shattering statements like "Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint-stool" (3.6.51 [Q only]). His famous final line, "And I'll go to bed at noon" (3.6.82 [F only]) can be played as a naïve comment on the collapse of the play's natural order, or as a meta-theatrical reference to his own premature departure. A modern audience, familiar with the play and caught up with the action, will always receive it as both.

Sher's final thoughts about the Fool reveal the extent of his creative extrapolations in the role:

> For me the Fool remains one of the most intriguing characters Shakespeare wrote, elusive and difficult to read on the printed page, but often very effective in performance. In some ways you could describe the writing as half-finished, a sketch; for the actor this is challenging and also flattering because Shakespeare is allowing us to fill in the missing spaces.
>
> (Sher 165)

Maynard Mack's deepest fear has been confirmed; the actor has assumed an authoritative status equal to the playwright; the lunatics have taken over the asylum. Under McGuire's principle of superposition, however, such an act of insurrection does not undermine Shakespeare's authority. It exists in complement with the text—overlapping or conflicting, but never erasing that which we think of as "the original." In the larger context of this study, the principle of superposition can be read as a unifying extension of Joseph Grigley's polytext and Jerome McGann's deformance theories. Whereas Grigley's polytextual schemata are predominantly centred on the text, McGuire's principle readjusts that model to place equal focus upon text-based iterations and performative events. The resulting tensions between textual and performance-based authority can be interpreted (and are received by spectators) as instantaneous acts of McGannian deformance. Even improvisational deformances are valid so long as they remain within the expansive scope of the Shakespearean text's potentialities—filling open silences with breath, tears, slapstick, violence, or the unexpected laughter of a dead daughter.

As a coda, I would like to return to my initial image—the laughing Cordelia—long enough to confirm its validity as a performance choice (or happy accident). The evidence comes from E.A.J. Honigmann, a respected Shakespeare scholar and one of the first to argue (in *The Stability of Shakespeare's Texts*, in 1965) that Renaissance playtexts were not monadic and unchanging entities. In *Myriad-Minded Shakespeare*, Honigmann observes that a familiar stage direction in Act 5, Scene 3 of *King Lear* has long been altered from the originals:

> *'Enter Lear, with Cordelia dead in his arms.'* So we read it in just about every modern text, although the Quarto and Folio stage-direction, *'Enter Lear, with Cordelia in his arms'*, by no means assures us that she is dead.
>
> (Honigmann 1989:90)

After tracing the emendation (*'dead'*) back to Nicholas Rowe's 1709 edition, he goes on to offer us an alternative presentation of the scene which resonates with Desdemona's unexpected revival in the last scene of *Othello*:

> If Cordelia returns to consciousness and then dies, as I would suggest, the final twist of the knife is that she is unable to speak … She opens her eyes; now it is the father who hangs breathlessly over his child. She wants to speak, but the words do not come; father and daughter are locked together in a look – again, so much has to be said *without words*; again, as Lear gazes into his dying daughter's eyes, the mystery of the universe, the need to *understand*."
>
> (Honigmann 1989:91)

Honigmann's reading is fanciful, and yet one cannot deny that "It has exactly the same authority as Rowe's guess that Cordelia is already dead" (Hongimann 1989:91). Once we have admitted the plausibility of a Cordelia who *lives*, the possibility of a Cordelia who *laughs* no longer seems beyond the pale.

Antonin Artaud wrote that "where simplicity and order reign, there can be no theater nor drama, and the true theater … is born out of a kind of organized anarchy" (Artaud 51). Without a stage tradition to connect us to the first performances, without comprehensive stage directions to resolve the open silences which riddle every scene, and with a multitude of new interpretations and performances occurring daily all around the world, *King Lear* is clearly in a state of irremediable anarchy. In order to help mitigate the effects of this eternal flux, scholars could afford to turn more often to those practitioners who are acclimatised to anarchy and paradox—the legitimate thieves and all-licensed fools of the acting world.

Chapter Four
A Freer Field of Pity

> The physical conditions of an open playhouse offer a means of control to both actors and audience in a shared shape. Control of the circumstances of performance then becomes, to some extent, up for grabs.
> (Kiernan 6)

In May 2001, *King Lear* returned to the Globe Theatre after nearly 400 years. Of course, it was not the same Globe Theatre, but rather the New Globe, which opened in Bankside, London in 1995; and it was not the same *King Lear*, but a conflation of two texts, drawing primarily from the First Quarto with supplements from the Folio (Ewbank 7). Both text and edifice were reconstructions based on historical, bibliographical and archaeological suppositions—ideas which collectively delineate a grand experiment to recreate the original conditions in which Shakespeare's plays were staged.

An experimental spirit has suffused the New Globe project from its earliest stages of design and construction. "The theatre will teach us," says Barry Day in *This Wooden 'O'*, an 'architectural biography' of the venue:

> That sums up the conviction of many of the actors and directors who look forward to *using and being used by* this unique space and it reflects their belief that no amount of academic theory can replace the experience of actually being there.
> (Day 268; italics mine)

Not to be excluded, scholars have also gravitated to the Globe, studying the restored 'authentic' productions of Shakespeare and his contemporaries from various critical angles in order to determine how the texts are transformed by the unique dynamics of the space. And, of course, spectators have flocked to the New Globe—a quarter of a million per year on average (*Telegraph* ¶1)—and, more

than even actors or scholars, they are eager to 'use and by used by' the Globe in whatever capacity the open-air playhouse affords.

Day's curious phrase of mutual utility reflects a recognition that, authenticity notwithstanding, the New Globe marks a site of cultural exchange. Everyone involved in the New Globe experiment—directors, actors, scholars, and spectators—are united by the hope that by reconstructing the physical context of Shakespeare's earliest performances, they will reconstitute the *social* context—that is, the Renaissance experience of playgoing, together with a sense of what the plays signified in their original time. Yet W.B. Worthen points out that "as everyone connected with the project is well aware, the Globe can only be a complex *contemporary* undertaking" (Worthen 2003:81), inexorably linked to the cultural context of its (re)creators. Even if the Globe is 'using' its practitioners and visitors in authentically Elizabethan ways, their reciprocal 'use' of the space is modulated by a cultural gap of four hundred years (and varying, but often vast, distances).

This complication is not new. The New Globe is not the first experiment in authentic stage reproduction, and our critical distance from previous revivalist attempts may help us to assess the new site's cultural dynamics. My exploration of the New Globe will therefore start a century before, with the productions of William Poel and the Elizabethan Stage Society. Leaping forward in time, I will then correlate reviews of the 2001 *King Lear* with the performance- and media-based theories of Worthen and Janet H. Murray in order to demonstrate that, just as Victorian experiments in authenticity reflected cultural preoccupations of the

fin de siécle, the New Globe exhibits clear characteristics of millennial culture: an experiential approach to history and narrative, and a willingness (or need) to engage with performance in terms of agency, immersion and transformation.

William Poel was the first theatre practitioner to advocate the revivalist doctrine which forms the Globe's *raison d'être*. He believed "that although Shakespeare had indeed written for all time, he had not written *out* of time; that as he had seen the world through Elizabethan eyes, so must we recover that vision if we wished to do him justice" (Speaight 43). This was the mandate under which he founded a series of small, itinerant theatre companies, the first of which was The Elizabethans, formed in 1879. Poel's practices clashed violently with the standard Victorian aesthetics: lavish scenery, lengthy intervals, and the ubiquitous proscenium 'picture frame.' Poel was intrigued by the stage dynamics of the Globe, and would have seized any opportunity to act or direct in such a space.[10] However, his theories were coldly received by his fellow practitioners, and his productions were chiefly relegated to inexpensive 'found' venues which shared few characteristics with the spacious Globe.

The resulting productions were received in the spirit of Shakespearean textual integrity and historical picturization. Poel's limited appeal to Victorian audiences was bolstered by his outspoken dislike of "Acting Editions" and adaptations. He advocated textual integrity on the stage at a time when Shakespeare's "pure" text was in great demand (as discussed in Chapter One). More importantly, his attempts to reconcile Elizabethan staging practices with Victorian stage architecture provided spectators with an appealing 'picture' of the

past without challenging the customary performance dynamic. One of Poel's contemporaries describes the situation in a review of an 1893 production of *Measure for Measure*:

> Mr. Poel did wonders, but he could not get rid of the proscenium arch. What he gave us was not an Elizabethan stage as it was to Elizabethan playgoers, but a picture of an Elizabethan stage seen through the frame of a modern proscenium. So we gained a good visual idea of a Shakespearean stage, but not the Elizabethan sensation of having an actor come forward to the edge of a platform in the midst of ourselves…
>
> (C.E. Montague, qtd. in Speaight 97).

Although Poel arrived at this compromise through economic restraints, the resulting dynamic of the 'window into history' was very much in keeping with Victorian ideology. By the 1890s, "the tendency to regard Shakespeare's plays as pictorial subjects, both on canvas and on stage, was long-standing" (Foulkes 11). Moreover, Poel's productions were staged in the era of photography, and coincided with the invention of another revolutionary visual technology: the cinema. In this context, Poel's revivalist aesthetic was adapted by its spectators into one of many current cases of historical picturization. To see Poel's *Hamlet* (for example) afforded a glimpse into the world of Elizabethan London, whereas the *Hamlet* of Sir Henry Irving offered a direct look at Elsinore.

The New Globe purports to eliminate this distinction by replacing the proscenium picture frame with the authentic architectural dynamics of Elizabethan playhouses. Instead of sitting in darkness and watching a film-like re-enactment of a distant time and place, Globe audiences stand (and sit) in daylight, surrounding the platform and the actors on all sides. There is no "fourth wall": spectators are unavoidably aware of one another's presence in the space, and

actors on the Globe stage cannot fail to notice the sea of faces staring up at them. This configuration changes the dynamic of performance in remarkable and often unexpected ways. It does not offer an imaginary window into Elsinore, or Verona, or the prehistoric Britain of *King Lear*. The stage is bare, evoking only its Elizabethan heritage. Yet the illusion of Elizabethanism is not seamless, either: spectators whose gazes travel through the Renaissance environment will also see each other—twenty-first century tourists in a sixteenth century space.

The 'problem' of the audience was raised before the Globe had even opened, and everyone involved with the project held their breaths to see how spectators would react and interact with the unique location. Before the first season, Barry Day described the Globe's plan, and the 'problem':

> The present feeling is that there will be a number of carefully-designed productions that attempt to adhere as closely as possible to what would appear to have been the original staging conditions. With that goes the realization that, however close that approximation may be, the one thing no one can replicate is the Elizabethan *audience*.
>
> (Day 278-279)

Since the official opening in 1997, directors' attitudes towards authenticity have varied. Some productions, like *Henry V* (1997, directed by Mark Rylance) have done what Day suggested, making authenticity a high priority. Others, like *Macbeth* (2001, directed by Tim Carroll) have rejected purism and treated the venue like any other, using sets and modern costumes to express a particular interpretation of the play. As one reviewer notes, by 2001 the Globe's mandate of authenticity had softened to the point where "all of the directors seem to have been encouraged to do whatever they liked to conceal the fact that they were

performing on a reconstructed Renaissance stage" (Potter 95). In spite of this shift, audience reactions to Globe productions have remained consistent and uncommon, as reviews of the 2001 *King Lear* suggest.

The production, directed by Barry Kyle and starring Julian Glover, received positive notices from five of the six reviewers whose articles and postings I studied. Writers made note of the set (designed by Hayden Griffin), composed of "bare wooden planks that conceal the fake marbling and lurid trompe-l'oeil effects" (*Telegraph* ¶4) of the usual Globe environment. Others singled out the music, which two reviewers compared to a "filmic" (Potter 97) soundtrack, tailored "for an audience perhaps more used to the cinema than the theatre" (Ewbank 7). Glover's Lear was described as "stern and volatile" (Garner, Jr. 2002:139), Michael Gould's Edmund "charismatic" (*Telegraph* ¶9) and "bluff" (Shuttleworth ¶3), and John McEnery's Fool a "sad, washed up, North-country music-hall artist" (*Telegraph* ¶9).[11] These comments, while positive, are hardly effusive; and no single performance or characteristic of the production emerges as uniformly praiseworthy. However varied in their opinions, all six reviewers make consistent note of two other aspects of the play. First, the critics noted (and often criticized) the production's light-hearted tone. Second, they either chastised or complimented the spectators for their vocal engagement with the play.

"Laughter comes in surprising places," (Lindsay ¶2) writes Crystal Lindsay in an online review, posted early in the production's run. The author of a *Telegraph* review agrees: "There is a lot of laughter, and the play does prove far funnier than I'd previously suspected" (*Telegraph* ¶7). While this reviewer

implies that the humour is inherent in the play itself, another critic faults the audience and the director for establishing "a puzzling choice of tone" (Shuttleworth ¶1):

> *King Lear* is a tragedy. It's often disconcertingly easy to lose sight of this during Kyle's production. Among the lines which unexpectedly get laughs are Lear's 'O, let me not be mad,' Gloucester's 'Alack, I have no eyes' and even, in the normally grim final movement, Edmund's reaction to the news of Goneril's and Regan's deaths.
>
> (Shuttleworth ¶2)

Stanton B. Garner, Jr.'s rebuttal of this view suggests that critics like Shuttleworth are subscribing to an elitist preconception of tragic drama which may not be compatible with Globe performance dynamics:

> There was a concern in the press that [Kyle's *Lear*] emphasized the comic over the tragic. Behind this verdict one sensed a deeper critique: that, like other Globe shows, the production played to the audience rather than to a cultural tradition of which tragedy remains the most prestigious emblem.
>
> (Garner, Jr. 2002:141)

Garner believes the Globe *King Lear* enabled the revival of "a more populist appreciation of tragedy's affective and interactive possibilities" (Garner, Jr. 2002:141). Garner's theory is an intriguing reversal of the crux described by Barry Day. Instead of producing authentic Renaissance plays for decidedly modern audiences, the Globe is now producing "modern" plays—inscribed by contemporary conceptions such as 'Tragedy'—for 'authentic' audiences—that is, audiences who are reclaiming the "affective and interactive possibilities" (Garner, Jr. 2002:141) inherent in the Globe environment.

Nor is "interactive" too strong a word. Since the New Globe's earliest productions, spectators have been interacting with the actors, taking license to

contribute to the play and its dynamics in ways most twenty-first century theatergoers would not consider. At the 1997 *Henry V*, audience members booed and hissed whenever the French lords entered. In the same year, at *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, spectators called out advice to the lovers onstage, including "Go on, give her a kiss!" and "Don't do it, Julia" (Kiernan 31-33). And, as I already discussed in the Introduction, *King Lear* was also subject to audience participation: "The night I was there, one female wag exhorted Edmund, faced with choosing between Goneril and Regan, to go for 'both'" (Woddis 16). Such vocal contributions from the house may be implicitly authorized by actors. In the case of *Lear*, Michael Gould's Edmund was allegedly "outrageous in the intimacies he establish[ed] with the audience" (Garner, Jr. 2002:141). Ian Shuttleworth not only faults the actors for granting the spectators license, but also cites this choice as the direct cause of the first problem (ie. the play's light tone): "having established a bantering relationship of equals with the audience, characters find it difficult to force us to follow them when they attempt to change emotional register" (Shuttleworth ¶2). Many critics and scholars find the resulting "festival atmosphere" (*Telegraph* ¶3) poisonous to Shakespeare's plays, and deny that it has anything to do with the performance dynamics of the original Globe Theatre. Stanley Wells writes:

> Shakespeare makes immense demands on the intellect, the imagination and the emotional response of his audiences. I find it impossible to believe that his plays were ever received in such a way … It is absurd to suggest that works of such complexity were written for, and popular with, audiences who misbehaved, as it is fashionable to suggest.
>
> (Wells, qtd. in Kiernan 24)

If audience participation and a lighter approach to tragedy were not authorized components of Renaissance playgoing, then the New Globe's tendency to evoke them must arise from elsewhere—from a contemporary, though not strictly theatrical, source.

W.B. Worthen believes that spectators' use of (and by) the Globe is primarily determined by our postmodern conception of history as theme park. He compares the site to "history-performance venues" (Worthen 2003:82) such as Plimoth Plantation (a reconstructed pilgrim settlement in Massachusetts) and the Jorvik Viking Centre in York. "What these sites share," he argues, is "a participatory *experience* of the past in a mode of performance designed to be pervasive, incorporating the audience in a virtual society, a landscape, an engulfing atmosphere" (Worthen 2003:82). In this context, spectators are encouraged to role-play a reenactment of a historical setting or event—an early modern theatre outing, for example. Their encouragement does not come from the actors (although they may exacerbate it), but from the culturally demarcated environment, which authorizes a 'visit to the past.' The resulting "genteel rowdiness," says Worthen, is "a modest, buttoned-down reenactment of 'Elizabethan' theatricality" (Worthen 2003:101). Spectators cheer the lovers and hiss at the villains because, having accepted the role of 'Elizabethan' playgoers, they feel it is expected of them.

Worthen's observations present audience members as largely passive participants, delivering a set of prescribed responses without engaging with the action of the play—and, perhaps for many spectators, he is correct. But he cannot

account for the more spontaneous sort of audience participation, such as the patron who told Edmund he should "Take 'em both!" (*Telegraph* ¶6). The closest parallel he offers is a pranking game called "Pilgrim-baiting," in which jaded visitors of historical recreation sites try "to get the actors to break frame and allude to your sneakers, sunglasses, wristwatch, cellphone" (Worthen 2003:89). Yet even when Globe patrons disturb the boundaries of performance, they still engage the actors within the boundaries of the *play*—addressing characters by name ("Don't do it, Julia!") and offering plausible suggestions ("Give her a kiss!").[12] The dynamic is not disruptive, though some critics might still call it such. It is an active and collaborative creation between actors and spectators, deriving from the pervasive 'pastness' Worthen describes, but growing to involve a form of agency in which spectators can modulate the circumstances and the tone of the performance.

One approach to understanding this dynamic can be found in the phenomenological theory discussed in Chapter Three, particularly in Bert O. States' theory of "binocular" vision. Spectators in the theatre perceive players in two simultaneous states: as actor and performer. In the New Globe, those two states still operate, but they may also extend to the audience members who, like the actors, now have roles to play: they are modern tourists playing Elizabethan playgoers. Quiet or disinterested spectators may see themselves exclusively as the former, but an active spectator may fluctuate between two states—quietly 'performing' as themselves, then booing or cheering as their 'characters' would do, then returning to 'performance' with a shouted comment ("Take 'em both!")

which calls attention to their status as a character within a drama. Moreover, in their fluctuations, spectators can actively control the way in which the *actors* are perceived. Shouting "Take 'em both!" to Edmund forces other spectators to shift their perspectives suddenly, weakening the mimetic mode of seeing (since, in a strictly mimetic context, Edmund should not be hearing voices) and throwing the performative dimension into focus.[13] Following such a shift, an actor can decide whether to ignore or react to the comment—and can thereby decide whether to revert to mimesis or to extend the performative dimension further in time. The result is an unpredictable and unusually interactive performance dynamic which transforms the audience's reception of the play while leaving the play's narrative unchanged.

A less direct, but no less profitable, critical approach to Globe dynamics—one which places interactivity centre stage, as it were—derives from studies in electronic and multiform narratives. In this burgeoning field, Janet H. Murray has laid the groundwork for connecting older narrative experiences (such as playgoing) to newer narrative encounters (hypertext, gaming, virtual reality) in her book *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*. Murray lists three characteristics of virtual narratives—and all of them apply to playgoing at the New Globe, albeit in sometimes unexpected ways. The three characteristics are immersion, agency, and transformation.

Immersion is the most directly applicable characteristic. Murray describes it as "the sensation of being surrounded by a completely other reality, as different as water is from air, that takes over all of our attention, our whole perceptual

apparatus" (Murray 98). As we have already seen, the experience of entering the Globe and participating in a playgoing event conveys a strong sense of immersion—one which a traditional theatre experience lacks, with its darkened auditorium and its "fourth wall." Worthen's terminology of "history-performance" sites—they are "virtual societ[ies]" and "engulfing atmosphere[s]" (Worthen 2003:82)—reinforces this similarity. It also reminds us that many modern encounters with history are virtual, involving archival databases or 3D graphic recreations (eg. C.I.S. mapping technology). One part of the appeal of a virtual immersive environments lies in finding its boundaries, or testing the degree of accuracy and consistency with which its world is constructed—hence Worthen's "Pilgrim-baiting." But, as Murray points out, "the experience of being transported to an elaborately simulated place is pleasurable in itself" (Murray 98), and surely accounts for much of the New Globe's allure.

However, Murray also acknowledges that "the more realized the immersive environment, the more active we want to be within it" (Murray 126), which leads to her second characteristic of electronic narratives. "Agency," she writes, "is the satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of our decisions and choices" (Murray 126). In exploring the issue of agency within virtual narratives, Murray raises the same questions that have caused such consternation at the Globe: "How can we enter the fictional world without disrupting it? How can we be sure that our imaginary actions will not have real results?" (Murray 103). Globe patrons solve this problem by adopting roles (Murray calls them "masks"), 'becoming' Renaissance playgoers, and adopting

the protocols of the Elizabethan theatre. This concession to the 'rules' of the environment allows spectators to explore their virtual world without fear of disrupting the illusion of historicity. Yet, once again, some visitors may feel the urge to test boundaries within this relationship, in order to see how the illusion sustains itself when given unexpected input. In electronic terms, these agential gestures (eg. "Take 'em both!") are akin to a game-player trying unexpected tactics (eg. Talking to an opponent instead of attacking it). They are not designed to destabilize the virtual environment, but rather to explore the range of options which the narrative's designers have provided for the user.

The vocal patrons of the New Globe are doing more than testing their limits, though; as my phenomenological reading suggests, they are actively transforming the site's performance dynamic. Transformation, Murray's third characteristic of electronic narratives, is a broad and extensible category; Murray's definition includes visual "morphing" technologies, mutable virtual reality environments, and "kaleidoscopic narratives" (Murray 154-156). One example which unquestionably applies to the Globe experience is the "multipositional" potential of most electronic narratives:

> Because we increasingly see the world and even our own identities as such complex, centerless, open-ended systems, we need a story environment that allows us to make sense of them by enticing us into exploring a dense narrative world from every possible perspective.
>
> (Murray 181)

Patrons in the Globe theatre enact this transformation literally, moving as they do "at any time during the performance to different parts of the watching space to get closer or for a different perspective on the action" (Kiernan 19). But the more

sophisticated transformative potential of the New Globe lies in spectators' interactive modulations of the actor/performer equilibrium. When audience members extemporize responses to the drama, they have a subtle but indelible effect on the phenomenal identities of players and playgoers alike, turning 'characters' into 'performers,' and 'modern' attendees into 'historical' ones. The transformation affects everyone within earshot—that is, everyone sharing the immersive environment. Independently, the effects are minor and momentary—a spontaneous collective deformance of the normative event—but, added up through the duration of a performance, they may have striking effects upon the tone, if not the story, of the play.

Recalling that all the reviews of *King Lear* commented upon the unexpected humour in the play, we may now interpret this comic aspect not as a calculated choice by the director or the actors, nor as a "moronic element of pantomime" (*Telegraph* ¶3) which uncouth patrons force upon the drama, but as the *interactive transformation* of a play culturally inscribed as Tragedy. The process is collaborative, and either actors or spectators may initiate it. Michael Gould might engage the audience directly and deliberately as Edmund, soliciting their contributions in transforming the experience. Or playgoers might shout out unsolicited comments, thereby taking the transformative reins themselves. This is what one reviewer means when she writes that "The audience could likewise be seen as the ultimate arbiters of fortune" (Potter 101). They do not intervene to mitigate the tragic outcome of the play, the way that Nahum Tate did with his adaptation. But they may share a part of Tate's urge, since they clearly perceive

within the play a comic undercurrent, and seize opportunities to bring it to the surface. Within any performance, the resulting dynamic does not diminish but rather strengthens the potential of the play. As another reviewer writes, this collaborative dynamic turns "audience to players, exposing a freer field of pity" (Lindsay ¶2).

There is no way to know whether Shakespeare's original audiences, watching *Lear* in approximately the same environment, generated the same dynamic, or modulated the play's tone in similar ways. The mandate of the New Globe says yes, they did. Barry Day writes that "We have come to regard Shakespeare as a subject for interpretation, since he came down to us divorced from his context. But now that context is restored" (Day 271)—and thus whatever transpires within that context is 'purely' Shakespearean. But the theories of Worthen and Murray suggest that they did *not* react as we did—or, if they did, they did so for different reasons. Worthen reframes the New Globe as a theme park, a "history-performance" space with its own set of cultural rules and expectations. And Murray, though not discussing the Globe directly, provides a modern cultural framework for interpreting the venue's immersive, agential, and transformative qualities.

Moreover, one can now contrast the ways in which the New Globe audiences are using and being used by their surroundings as opposed to the ways in which Victorian audiences engaged with William Poel's revivalist productions a century before. Just as Poel's Victorian audiences viewed history through a picture frame, modern audiences view history as a theme park. And just as Poel

was mounting his productions at a time when photographic and cinematic technologies were beginning to transform cultural narratives, the Globe productions coincide with the emergence of hypertext, virtual reality, and other digital narrative technologies. The New Globe is not a computer simulation, but it is a simulation. Spectators who have engaged with computer generated environments, or even electronic texts—that is, the vast majority of New Globe patrons—will, consciously or otherwise, import their narrative predispositions to the theatre, and will seek out opportunities to practice agency and transformation on the space and on the play.

To admit such an interpretation is not to declare the failure of the New Globe's grand experiment. If the purpose were to duplicate authentic Shakespearean performances in all respects, including audience reception, then the experiment was doomed right from the start. But authenticity may have other functions besides simple duplication. As the New Globe's Artistic Director Mark Rylance says, "Authenticity is nothing unless it's authenticity that reveals better methods of doing things, that helps the plays function and work in new and unexpected ways" (qtd. in Day 279). The New Globe is a polytextual *event*—a producer of new performance-based iterations or *outcomes* which exemplify the intersections between history/authenticity and modern cultural interpretation. No performance in the New Globe will return its text to its originating site, even if the text were 'pure' and if the spectators were quiet as the grave. Instead, performances yield new, unique dynamics between then and now—and therefore new, unique dynamics between text and actor, actor and spectator, spectator and

site, etc. The chief results of the New Globe experiment extend from the acknowledgement that, even as we find ways to transport ourselves backwards through time, we are also moving forward. As Edgar says, "Men must endure/ Their going hence even as their coming hither./ Ripeness is all." (*King Lear* 5.2.9-11).

Another lesson to be gained from the New Globe experiment is that modern audiences have the capacity and inclination to engage with Shakespeare's texts in interactive ways. This trend becomes significant when one considers the abundant multiplicity of a work like *Lear*, and looks for ways to represent that multiplicity without restricting or containing it. Actors, directors, adaptors, and editors have enacted transformations upon *Lear* since its inception. In the New Globe, audiences have begun to look for spheres of interactive influence in *Lear* as well; are readers far behind? A twenty-first century presentation of the *Lear* polytext must not only balance its dizzying range of textual and performance-based iterations, but it must also factor into its design its readers' interactive inclinations. The challenge of designing and implementing such a *Lear* will be the focus of my final chapter.

Chapter Five
The Web of Imagination

> Whenever I open my text of *King Lear* and look fixedly at certain phrases sitting on the page, they begin to move, change shape, dance, wriggle, turn inside out, sprout wings, and fly about flapping from one speech or speaker to the other until my wits begin to turn.
>
> (Berger, Jr. 144)

> Writing on the computer is very different from print—it dances and wriggles, it is subject to instant change of format, and so on.
>
> (Worthen 2003:22)

For *Lear* scholars, everything changed in 1987. That was the year Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells published The Complete Oxford Shakespeare anthology featuring *The History of King Lear* immediately followed by *The Tragedy of King Lear*. This publication concretized the theories of the *Lear* revisionists, who had argued in *The Division of the Kingdoms* (1983) that the Quarto *Lear* (ie. *The History*) and the Folio (*Tragedy*) had equal integrity as Shakespearean texts. The revisionists' ideas were controversial—after all, their claims belied the notion of an 'ideal' master-text, and threatened the Shakespearean fabula—but the Oxford Shakespeare seemed to cow the opposition by changing the two *Lears* from abstract theory to black and white reality. There they were, one after the other, sanctioned by the Oxford label, stabilized by print. There was no going back.

Peter L. Shillingsburg, who has spent a great deal of time thinking about matters of versionality, thinks that this sort of shift is semantic and unnecessary:

> It really does not matter if someone wants to call the manuscript of *The Red Badge* and the Appleton *The Red Badge* two different works, though it seems a waste of a good word, since the proportion of the two that is identical far exceeds that which is different. They are not different works in the same sense that

> *Maggie* and *The Red Badge* are. The important point is that the two are different and yet related.
> (Shillingsburg 103)

Shillingsburg goes on to refer to G. Thomas Tanselle's distinction between "horizontal" revisions and "vertical" revisions—the former being differentiations "existing in two versions that do not differ substantially in overall meaning," and the latter being alterations "which alter the basic intentions and result in a 'new work'" (Shillingsburg 106). Following this schema, the agenda of Taylor, Wells, and the revisionists was simply to reorient the critical perspective of the two *Lears* from a "horizontal" to a "vertical" axis. But the result has been a decade of editorial vertigo, as scholars lurch between a recognition and a reality—the recognition that *Lear* is polytextual, and that "one's experience of each [text] is informed and modified by knowledge of the other in ways far more intricate than is the case when one reads 'genuinely' separate works by the same author" (Shillingsburg 103)—and the reality that the primary scholarly medium (ie. the book) is not designed to foreground such an experience.

The problem with books is a problem of authority. Traditionally, a critical edition "centralizes its display of the edited work around one chosen or eclectically constructed version, known as the base text or the copy-text" (Dahlström ¶8). The authority of the base text is emphasized by all its paratextual materials—commentaries, notes, introductions and appendices. "Other, heterodox versions of the work" are thus consigned to locations of secondary authority—"the printed page's cellar, the catacombs of the SE [scholarly edition]" (Dahlström ¶8). Even a text like the Complete Oxford with two equally legitimate

versions of a work implies hierarchy by virtue of its linear appearance. Editors have tried to solve this problem through a range of unorthodox publications, including parallel text editions and "marked up" conflations. Jerome McGann describes such curiosities as "at once very beautiful and very ugly, fascinating and tedious," and believes they "drive the resources of the codex to its limits and beyond" (McGann 2001:79). In a word, they are incunabula, anticipating an entirely new medium which does not place authority upon a singular, unvarying text, but which authorizes and supports multiplicity. As such, they allow readers to configure versions and components of *King Lear* upon any axis they prefer—or on many simultaneously.

In this chapter, I consider some of the most recent (and in some cases ongoing) iterations of *King Lear*, charting the work's latest metamorphosis from a singular, book-bound text to a complex and unabashedly multiple entity capable of existing only in a virtual, electronic state. Starting with a survey of the print-based iterations which followed the work's Oxfordian fission in 1987, I will go on to consider how *Lear's* multiplicity and authority are altered when it makes the leap from incunabular codex to hypertext archive.[14] Using examples from current electronic scholarship, I will consider the effects of hypertext upon three of the characteristics of *Lear* previously dealt with in this paper: its polytextuality, which I introduced in Chapters One and Two; its mutability, which I have discussed in terms of deformance (Chapter Two) and superposition (Chapter Three); and its extensibility—that is, the capacity for readers, editors, actors and adaptors to generate new iterations of the work through the use and interaction of

their spheres of influence. The electronic archive inherently foregrounds, enables, and encourages these three critical characteristics, making it a highly valuable medium in which to explore and contribute to *Lear's* ever-replicating structure.

Generally speaking, the print editions of *Lear* which followed the Complete Oxford can be classified as either parallel texts, which present multiple separate versions, or marked up texts, which integrate the versions but provide some typographic system to help readers discern the provenance of each component of the new conflation. The greatest value of classifying the print editions in this way is that it illustrates their inability to offer *both* configurations. A survey of examples will show how both formats anticipate, but fail to instantiate, the multiple *Lear* of hypertext.

The Complete Oxford is the first parallel text of *King Lear*.[15] Although it does not offer its two versions in a synoptic format (ie. in parallel columns on facing pages), it clearly offers the reader two unconflated texts, with introductions and comparative notes preceding each one. Placing the two versions in immediate proximity may not seem remarkable, but it constitutes a deviation from the strictly chronological structure of the rest of the anthology (if, as Wells reports, the *Tragedy* revision was done "probably two or three years after the first version" [Wells 1271]). It was important to the editors to emphasize the play's multiple status, probably because revisionism was still a controversial critical stance. For the same reason, it was also important that the editors eliminate any aspect of the book's design that might suggest, or even facilitate, conflation (a practice which is

explicitly denounced in both introductions). Therefore, the two versions are not arranged in a way that encourages line-by-line comparison.

Michael Warren sought to remedy this defect with the 1989 publication of *The Parallel King Lear*. In this edition, two facsimiles (of Q1 and F) appear on facing pages, with individual passages staggered to compensate for Q1 sections absent from F and vice versa. Warren's edition was complemented in 1993 by René Weis's *King Lear: A Parallel Text Edition*, which modernized the type and spelling of the two versions. These editions appeal to students and scholars who wish to scrutinize the differences between the two texts, although they are difficult to read for content. However, the two parallel editions pale in comparison to Michael Warren's subsequent publication: the *Complete King Lear 1608-1623* (1995). This unique volume reprints *The Parallel King Lear* alongside separate facsimiles of Q1, Q2, and F. "Furthermore," writes Margreta de Grazia, "since all but the [first] unit consist of loose rather than bound pages, the materials can be assembled into any number of additional textual units" (de Grazia 1995:248). In order to achieve this versatility, Warren not only sacrificed the linear stability of the Complete Oxford, but he also "broke out of the codex format" altogether, creating a mutable quasi-codex which "anticipates the electronic screen" (de Grazia 1995:248). *The Complete King Lear* demonstrates the extent to which a text can be multiplied within a single edition, but it also illustrates the limits of the print medium.

Faced with these limits, scholarly editors began looking for ways to condense multiple versions of *Lear* onto a single page. This practice, in its ideal

format, would alleviate the need for cross-reading or page shuffling by providing all the variant textual information in one place. Its philosophy differs from traditional conflation in that its editors do not posit its singular text as authoritative. Instead, they use systems of variant fonts and/or symbols to foreground the instability that underlies the eclectic text. Margreta de Grazia accurately describes these texts as "typographic systems for flagging textual hybridity" (de Grazia 1995:249), but I have borrowed more succinct terms from programming terminology: they are "marked up" or "tagged" texts.[16]

So far, the two editions that make the most use of tags are the New Folger Library Shakespeare series and the Arden Third Edition *King Lear*. The Folger series, edited by Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine, "introduces a system of square, angled, and half brackets … to designate passages incorporated from different texts" (de Grazia 1995:248). In order to take advantage of this system, the reader must become familiarized with the meaning of the different tags. And since the variant status of each play in the canon differs, the brackets can mean different things in different contexts. Despite this potential for inconsistency, de Grazia praises the Folger system for "display[ing] the textual heterogeneity" of the plays "as integral (though parenthetic) to the text rather than as a subscript in the lemma or postscript in the appendixes" (de Grazia 1995:249), as in most editions. The work's multiple status is conveyed as effectively as in the parallel editions, albeit in a more symbolic way.

The Arden Third Edition *King Lear*, edited by R.A. Foakes, attempts to alleviate some of the more cryptic elements of markup by building the meaning of

each tag into the tag itself. Instead of using brackets or variant fonts, Foakes uses superscript Qs and Fs to indicate respectively which passages of *Lear* originate in the First Quarto and the Folio. However, this system cannot cope with several of the most complicated variant segments.[17] Even the most innocuous lines often become complex upon the page, as in:

> LEAR ^{Q}Why,^{Q} what canst ^{Q}thou^{Q} tell, ^{Q}my^{Q} boy?
> (1.5.17)

Andrew Murphy describes reading the 3rd Arden *King Lear* as "an oddly displacing experience" (Murphy 415), and it is not difficult to see why. The text has become so visibly pluralistic that it often becomes impossible to read or interpret any single version of the work. For example, if one wishes to isolate either the Quarto or the Folio version of Lear's final lines—

> LEAR And my poor fool is hanged. No, no, ^{F}no^{F} life!
> Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life
> And thou no breath at all? ^{Q}O^{Q} thou'lt come no more,
> Never, never, never, ^{F}never, never.^{F} –
> Pray you undo this button. Thank you, sir. ^{Q}O, o, o, o.^{Q}
> ^{F}Do you see this? Look on her: look, her lips,
> Look there, look there! *He dies.*^{F}
> (5.3.304-309)

—one must practically recopy the passage with appropriate cuts and insertions. Even the conflated text itself, which might still be of interest to first readers of *King Lear*, is difficult to access, since the markup competes with the text for the reader's focus. Clearly, the ideal solution would involve 'toggling' the tags on and off, or even shifting between Quarto, Folio, and conflated texts. This can only be accomplished in electronic media, as my subsequent examples will show.

It is unfair to lay the blame for these shortcomings upon the editors, who are clearly taking desperate and heroic measures to present and interpret an unstable work. Rather, the fault lies with the technology of print, which cannot adequately represent multiplicity without sacrificing the clarity and linearity that make books useful to begin with. Jerome McGann believes all critical editions have a common limitation, in that

> they deploy a book form to study another book form. This symmetry between the tool and its subject forces the scholar to invent analytic mechanisms that must be displayed and engaged at the primary reading level—for example, apparatus structures, descriptive bibliographies, calculi of variants, shorthand reference forms, and so forth.
>
> (McGann 2001:56)

The structural concessions of parallel texts and typographic intrusions of marked up texts are "analytic mechanisms" of the sort McGann describes, and ingenious ones at that; but they "function at the same level as the material being analyzed," and "as a result, the full power of [their] logical structures is checked and constrained by being compelled to operate in a bookish format" (McGann 2001:56). In a nutshell, they are monolithic structures trying to represent and facilitate the analysis of multiple entities.

Yet from a computing perspective, the most interesting characteristics of parallel and marked up texts are not what they *cannot* do, but what they *always already* do. Despite the inherent difficulty of reading synoptic texts, they remind us that reading is a synthesizing process. When one is reading *any* text, parallel or monadic, one makes associations and syntheses that send the eye skipping back and forth across the page. This is what Harry Berger, Jr. means when he describes

how the printed lines of *Lear* "begin to move, change shape, dance, wriggle … and fly about flapping from one speech or speaker to the other" (Berger, Jr. 144). Even a traditional edition of *King Lear*, with a single conflated copy-text, may still constitute a 'parallel' reading experience, as one mentally compares the text upon the page to memories of productions and prior readings, or extends one's associative process outside *Lear* to draw parallels to other works, facts, or experiences. The codex may assert stability and linearity in its structure and format, but a parallel text serves to remind us that reading is not an inherently stable or linear process.

Likewise, a tagged edition like the 3rd Arden reminds us that *all* texts contain what can be defined as markup. Once again, Jerome McGann has considered this issue, and concludes that "there is no such thing as an unmarked text" because "all texts implicitly record a cultural history of their artifactuality" (McGann 2001:138). That is, all printed texts, from prompt-books to performance editions to scholarly editions, contain 'metadata' that, when properly decoded, can elucidate their origins and history. When the New Bibliographers combed through the Folio to identify compositors and evaluate printing practices, they were scrutinizing markup as implicit, even behavioural and stylistic, tags which were not as readily discernible as superscript Qs and Fs. Moreover, even though most of these tags were not even deliberately inserted into the text, they still served the same function to the critical readings of the New Bibliographers. McGann defines the function of all markup when he stipulates that "the marked text, as a record of its historical passage, is ipso facto a record of its previous

readings, that is to say, its generative rules" (McGann 2001:138). I will touch upon the subject of a text's "generative rules" later in this chapter. For now, it is sufficient to recognize that McGann's definitions apply to *all* texts, whether explicitly tagged or not. Every version of *King Lear* contains metadata which can be read not only as a record of its historical passage but also as an archive of its previous readings. Books do not only bespeak their contents; they also bespeak their histories.

These facts—that reading is a parallel process, that books contain metadata—are intriguing from a computing perspective because they are key characteristics of electronic reading environments. A computer-based reading experience does not have to be parallel or synoptic (or at least, no more so that a book-based reading experience would be), but it usually is. Graphical user interfaces and operating systems such as Microsoft Windows and Mac OS encourage the display and interaction of multiple texts. Users familiar with these systems expect to be able to juxtapose and merge different bodies of text from many diverse sources. In addition, electronic documents have abundant metadata—even if, like book-based markup, that data is not always visible at first. Collectively, the programming languages that support software and operating systems, the formatting and structural tagging that underlies all web pages, including semantic tagging systems like XML,[18] are all examples of metadata which, like the markup in print texts, can be used to determine a file's history and context. Together, these two characteristics—the modularity of texts, and the

metatextual markup which surrounds texts—help to bridge the gap between the monolithic codex and the multiple electronic medium.

Of course, these characteristics apply to all works, and *Lear* is by no means the only work to appear in the incunabular formats I have described above. But other characteristics of early modern texts, and Shakespeare's playtexts in particular, do make them especially suitable for hypertext. First, most works from the early modern period (and earlier) do not survive in their original manuscript formats, making them always already virtual. As Mats Dahlström puts it, the "virtual, fluctuating state of the classical works harmonises with the fluid dynamics of immaterial digital text" (Dahlström ¶29). A further correlation arises from the fact that early modern texts were usually published in a state of flux:

> The idea of a book embodying the final, perfected state of a literary work was not a Renaissance one, and what the Renaissance practice produced was an edition in which it was unlikely that any copy of a book would be identical to any other copy.
> (Orgel 15)

Some scholars may argue that the mutability of Renaissance books was an economic exigency, rather than a philosophical standard, but the fact remains that Shakespeare's texts have never been stable, and consequently they lose nothing when transferred into the "unstable" medium of hypertext. And, should adherents of the codex still object, one might point out that Shakespeare's works did not begin as books in any case. They are plays, designed to be engaged through performance, not reading—and, in that respect, they are again a candidate for electronic transfer. W.B. Worthen believes that hypertext "models the cultural fungibility of dramatic texts more completely than print does," because, like

performance, hypertext can situate the play in an interactive context "where meanings arise from what we do to texts in order to make something from them" (Worthen 2003:212-213). Literary scholars are certainly not accustomed to thinking of Shakespeare's plays as virtual, mutable entities whose meanings change as they are variably acted upon; but that is precisely what they are, and as such, they are already close kin to electronic media.

Even so, *King Lear* stands out. The boundless multiplicity it has demonstrated throughout its critical and production history, and the challenges it has raised for editors since the Complete Oxford, have the potential to make it the first prize blossom in the garden of literary hypertexts. Some electronic scholars have tried to cultivate, engraft, and even transplant it, with varying degrees of success. However, none of the electronic *Lears* to date have taken advantage of the changes in authority that hypertext can bring. Peter Donaldson writes that

> Multimedia hypertext reconfigures the relationship between an authoritative cultural *source* (a Shakespeare play) and its belated, aesthetically and culturally divergent contemporary *versions*, changing the way we think about such matters as 'the original text' and its reproduction in 'authoritative' versions and productions.
> (Donaldson 125)

As I have demonstrated in the previous chapters, *King Lear* has always negotiated authority in complex and paradoxical ways. As I survey some contemporary electronic iterations of *Lear* which expand upon the play's essential characteristics of polytextuality, mutability, and extensibility, I will propose refinements which can capitalize upon *Lear's* multiple authority by offering its users the ability to generate new iterations of the work from their own distinctive spheres of influence.

In Chapter One, I introduced Joseph Grigley's theory of polytext, which configures all manifestations of a single work as *textual events* and/or *outcomes*, linked together by a chain of iterations. *Lear's* inherent polytextuality is a useful entry point into discussing hypertext because of the tendency in electronic media towards archivism—that is, the inclusion of any and all materials related to a work, comprising a sort of database of iterations. Just as Michael Warren's *Complete King Lear 1608-1623* expanded the number of textual events from two to three (or four, if you count his own parallel text edition), a hypertext archive, unhampered by printing costs or storage capacity, could increase that number exponentially. Furthermore, it could include multimedia materials such as artwork, photographs, sound and video clips, and any other relevant paratextual materials, "*whether those texts are authorized or not*" (Grigley 176, italics in original).

When faced with such a deluge, the issue becomes one of structure and navigation. McGann writes that, "unlike a traditional edition, a hypertext is not organized to focus attention on one particular text or set of texts. It is ordered to disperse attention as broadly as possible" (McGann 2001:71). While this alleviates the problem of hierarchical authority found in the codex, it has the potential to leave the user helplessly disoriented in the face of so many variant texts and materials. Granted, "the hypertext is always structured according to some initial set of design plans that are keyed to the specific materials in the hypertext and to the imagined needs of the users of those materials" (McGann 2001:71)—but what if those imagined needs are insufficient? The hypertext's

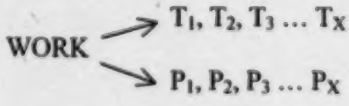
abilities to display parallel texts, execute searches, and interpret results prove useless if the user cannot find the specific texts of interest in the moment, or the functions necessary for extended study.

The Cambridge *King Lear Archive* seeks to solve this problem by establishing a branching structure emanating from a central text. Edited by Christie Carson and Jackie Bratton and published in 2000, the *Cambridge King Lear CD-ROM: Text and Performance History Archive* contains "ten full texts of *King Lear* as it has been performed over time" (Carson 434), including Tate's adaptation and subsequent hybrids. It also contains "a substantial body of critical and reference material" (Carson 434) and an "archive of still images from performances over several centuries" (Best 2002:¶9). Users have three options for navigating through this maze of iterations: the linear Table of Contents, the keyword search function, and a "reconflated Finder Text," created by the disk's editors "to allow the user to work through the play's structure to discover thematically the other materials on the disk" (Carson 435). As the editors explain in the disk's Introduction and User's Guide, the multiple points of entry are designed to help the user "map the many lives of *King Lear*, without telling the user what to think about that territory" (qtd. in Best 2002:¶13).

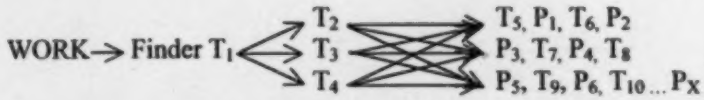
Although the *King Lear Archive* strives to present a navigable corpus without imposing structure or hierarchy upon it, this ambition is only partially successful. The first navigational option (the Table of Contents) is an understandable concession to book-based critical editions, but as such it imposes a predetermined and subjective structure, while the second option (the search

function) is the exact opposite, replacing structure with complete chaos—invisible chaos, since the user has no way of seeing the searchable materials until the actual results appear. That leaves the Finder Text; a trunk off which other texts and materials branch. The Finder Text carries an authoritative bias because of its centrality—in the virtual geography of the *King Lear Archive*, it has replaced the Folio as the textual *pointe d'origine*, the "Home" from which all navigations depart. In addition, the disk's designers only link three other versions to the Finder Text (modern spellings of Q1 and F, plus Jackie Bratton's *Plays in Performance* edition), leaving six other texts (Tate et al.) unlinked and consigned to tertiary authority. Furthermore, since it is a Finder *Text* within a multimedia environment, the design implicitly consigns its non-textual materials to a lower status. Since the non-textual materials pertain most directly to performances of *Lear*, the result is an authoritative hierarchy reminiscent of Joseph Grigley's polytext schema, with a chain of texts above a chain of performance iterations.

Reconfiguring Grigley's polytextual schema may help to reveal a solution to the problem of archival hierarchy. In Chapter Two, I showed how Joseph Grigley's polytextual schema could be shifted to account for a different dynamic between text and performance (ie. the dynamic which gave rise and longevity to Tate's adaptation). The result was two separate chains of iterations (where T = 'Text' and P = 'Performance'):



Out of necessity, the *Cambridge King Lear Archive* employs the Finder Text to stabilize its corpus. Adapting Grigley's schema to its structure would result in something like this:



While this is a perfectly manageable configuration for a hypertext archive, it remains an arbitrary and subjective way of organizing the *Lear* polytext. However, there is no reason why an archive could not be reconfigured according to its *user's* preferences, rather than its editors'. A user could select a primary text, or indeed any iteration of the polytext which has been linked into the archive. From there, one could develop a chain of polytextual associations, either using pre-established hyperlink connections or creating one's own by placing different iterations parallel upon the screen, and forming links through a click-and-drag interface. Jon Bath has developed a rudimentary example of a user-controlled database in his *Synoptic Text Interface*, which provides the user with an means of comparing two or more versions of a text. Each time the user switches primary texts, the comparisons will yield new results—and the user will be repeatedly reminded of the flexibility and transformative potential of a polytext.[19]

A comparative analysis of this sort represents only one method of transforming extant texts through electronic means. Hypertext environments encourage users to experiment with combining, reshuffling, and altering the format of their constituent parts. Shillingsburg points out that "inter- and intratextuality have already been available to us in print editions"—the best

examples being parallel texts—but what changes in hypertext "is the dexterity with which we can explore the relations within and between texts for ourselves" (Shillingsburg 163-164). Moreover, this new facility is not merely restricted to texts, but involves all forms of media. Since "the structure of the archive is open-ended and the virtually endless combinations of pathways which the user can follow utterly arbitrary," many users rapidly "abandon linear reading in favour of dynamic interaction with texts and intertextual analysis" (Massai 103). A work with an established propensity for mutability provides a fitting template for electronic experiments of this kind. We have seen the inherent mutability of *Lear* in many forms—in adaptations, improvisation, and in both McGann's notion of deformance and McGuire's principle of superposition.

The most basic form of electronic deformations involves changing the appearance of the polytext: integrating two or more texts, for example, or modifying the visible components of the text or metatext. Jon Bath and Michael Best have both refined techniques for integrating parallel texts. Bath's *Synoptic Text Interface* can 'enfold' two versions of a text—say, Q1 and F of *King Lear*—and highlight the points where the texts diverge, using one colour or font for Q-only text and a different colour or font for F-only text.[20] Best's somewhat whimsical proposal for electronic conflation involves "a semantic field where the text dances between variant readings" (Best 2002:¶27), mutating before the user's eyes from one spelling to another. Best acknowledges that "this technique would be infuriating to those who desire stability and predictability" in their texts, but he assumes that "modern, sophisticated, readers of Shakespeare understand the

indeterminate nature of the text" and "would find this kind of mutability wholly desirable" (Best 2002:¶31). But it is dangerous to assume what users desire. As in the case of the Finder Text in the *King Lear Archive*, Best's dancing text may frustrate users if it enforces an aspect of deformance that remains outside of their control.

Electronic archives can also grant the user the ability to modify what aspects of the text, or metatext, are visible. Once two texts have been conflated (as with Bath's software), a user can control the degree of visible information about the new text on the screen—toggling its markup on, to see the provenance of each textual component, or off, for a straightforward reading experience. More advanced (but as yet theoretical) applications of the same principle would allow the user to flip between original and modern spelling versions, or to render a text's hyperlinks or commentary visible or invisible at will. Unlike printed notes, the content of the commentary is unfixed because, as John Lavagnino suggests, "in reading you could choose the sorts of notes to be displayed. You could choose to display, or not, the notes about sources, or biblical allusions, or glosses for words like 'anon' and 'presently'; and you could choose versions of the notes with greater or lesser detail" (Lavagnino 199). Having proposed this system of subjective commentaries, Lavagnino goes on to raise the concern that "the notion of separating different varieties of commentary requires that they be *written* separately" (Lavagnino 200). But this is not necessarily the case. Just as components of a base text can be tagged (as 3rd Arden *King Lear* does with its superscript Qs and Fs), so can components of a commentary. In fact, XML

encoding is designed to facilitate the use of semantic tags, so that portions of commentary (or interviews, or reviews, or *any* texts) can be marked up according to their subject matter. A user could then specify, for instance, that only commentary that pertains to <EDGAR> would appear on the screen, or that materials that deal with <COSTUMES> and/or <STAGING> but not <MUSIC> be accessible through hyperlinks. With access to such options, the user can begin to construct a completely personalized critical edition of a play.

The most ambitious example of user-controlled mutability is the *Shakespeare Interactive Archive*, an MIT project co-directed by Peter S. Donaldson, Larry Friedlander, and Janet H. Murray. Begun in 1991, the project seeks to integrate textual and filmic material into a "virtual research environment" (Donaldson 104), where users can compare and juxtapose passages of text with related film clips "to *reconfigure* them for presentation in their own multimedia essays" (Donaldson 103).[21] The archive also offers users opportunities to compare variant versions of a particular text. Peter S. Donaldson writes:

> The medium facilitates such "horizontal" readings and fosters the sense that a variety of such "readings"—those of early texts, contemporary performances and our own belated interpretations—can coexist and enrich the experience of a play without fragmenting it.
>
> (Donaldson 111)

Donaldson's theory, and his examples of scholarly and pedagogical applications of the archive, suggest that it bears a strong affinity to the recurrent polytextual and deformational elements of *Lear*, and that it operates within a non-linear, non-hierarchical authority. Yet there is still an authoritative gap within the *Shakespeare Interactive Archive*. It allows its users to compare and juxtapose

textual and filmic components in an open-ended manner, and it does not implicitly privilege any of its texts or films, but it restricts the user by providing a fixed and pre-determined set of iterations. Its editors, like the creators of the *King Lear Archive*, have included a broad range of materials, but their selections make all external iterations secondary. New performances cannot be added, nor can new editions or adaptations of a playscript. The *Shakespeare Interactive Archive* is polytextual and mutable, but it is not extensible.

Extensibility is the most critical common characteristic of *Lear* and hypertext. The extensibility of *Lear* has been demonstrated in every chapter of this paper, as different groups exert their diverse spheres of influence upon the play through editing, adaptation, directing, actorial choices, and the modulating effect of audience response. It is no accident that Jerome McGann selects the play as an example when describing the extensibility of hypertext:

> If one were to create a hypertext of (say) *King Lear*, the 'edition' *as it is a hypertext* can pass forward in time indefinitely. Someone will have to manage it, but if it remains hypertextual it will incorporate and then go beyond its initial design and management. It will evolve and change over time, it will gather new bodies of material, and its organizational substructures will get modified, perhaps quite drastically.
> (McGann 2001:71)

Just as the internet evolves macrocosmically, so too may an individual archive or database evolve as new material is added to it. But for a hypertext archive to evolve with authoritative democracy, it must accept material from a wide range of sources. Since editors, adaptors, directors, actors, and audience members have all contributed to the *Lear* polytext, they should all be afforded opportunities to extend the *Lear* hypertext.

The one project which strives to approximate this goal may be found, appropriately, on the World Wide Web. "*The Internet Shakespeare Editions* realizes a multiple version of print authorship, enabling a rapid coordination of different texts" (Worthen 2003:204) as well as essays and performance-based materials. When Michael Best created the website in 1996, it was principally designed "to make educational materials on Shakespeare available to teachers and students," (Best 2005:¶3) and its primary resource was its series of digitized early editions of Shakespeare plays (as well as related works, such as Tate's *King Lear*). Since its inception, the site has evolved to respond to the needs and contributions of its visitors—not just scholars and students, but also theatre practitioners and general fans of Shakespeare in text and performance. The current site gently guides its visitors into different areas of interest using an iconographic architecture: playtexts are found in the Library, performance records in the Theater, general interest materials in the Annex, and so on. Most significantly, the *ISE* accepts submissions to its archive, and maintains an open forum for discussion of the materials therein.

Like most of the electronic examples I have studied, the *ISE* is still in its infancy, and as an extensible archive, it leaves a great deal to be desired. Its established hyperlinks are few, and it does not possess the technology needed for on-site transformations of its materials, although there are plans to include text analysis tools pertaining to "frequency distribution, collocations associate with specific words, proximity searches, and so on" (Best 2005:¶30). Furthermore, as a site with scholarly roots, it imposes a hierarchy upon its submitted materials,

storing only "peer reviewed" submissions in its Library while consigning other documents to the inferior lodgings of the Annex. Finally, there is an authoritative paradox lurking underneath the site's centralizing resource. As W.B. Worthen points out, the digitized facsimile editions support the bibliographic ideal "that reproducing the words is reproducing the work" (Worthen 2003:205), and that facsimiles of (say) the Q1 and F *King Lear* carry the same authority as their printed predecessors—especially when the digitized editions are considered "peer reviewed." But Worthen concedes that "at the present time most writing on the internet seems vaguely authorized at best" (Worthen 2003:211), mostly because the virtual environment is inherently extensible and therefore inherently unstable. By providing facsimiles of the Q1 and F *King Lears*, Best is following the deconflationist mandate of the Complete Oxford. However, as *online digitized* texts, the facsimiles can easily be downloaded, reformatted, and transformed in any number of sophisticated ways, thereby licensing not only new conflations, but also theatrical cuts and adaptations hearkening back to Tate and the hybrid texts. On the one hand, *ISE's* "peer reviewed" texts signal and demand authority, but on the other hand, they beckon to be claimed, transformed, and remade in a multitude of unauthorized ways.

By combining the inherent extensibility of *The Internet Shakespeare Editions* with the characteristics of polytextuality (as seen in the *King Lear Archive*) and mutability (as in the *Shakespeare Interactive Archive*), it is possible to imagine a fully interactive, navigable, and yet non-hierarchical *King Lear*—one which allows users to exert different forms of control upon the work, depending

on their interests and their spheres of influence. Like the *ISE*, this theoretical *HyperLear* would grant its users multiple points of entry, encouraging them to approach the work with their own interests moderately pre-defined. The entry interface might simply involve an extrapolation of the *ISE's* metaphoric icons, offering users several "localities" from which to view the iterations stored within—a Stage or Rehearsal Hall for actors, a Lobby for audience members, a Classroom for students, and so on. Alternatively, the *HyperLear* might require a more intricate registration procedure, with survey questions designed to gauge each user's background, interests, and likely sphere of influence. Either system has the same effect: to enable the spontaneous reorganizing of the archive, so as to foreground links and iterations which the user would find useful, and enable transformational options which the user would be most inclined to take advantage of. For example, a director may want non-conflated texts which can be easily edited for production, while a first-year undergraduate student probably prefers a stable and conflated text, perhaps with markup and notes that can be flipped on and off.[22]

From a personalized point of entry, the new user could then navigate through iterations using pre-established hyperlinks, or forge customized links by opening multiple windows and using a click-and-drag interface. As with the *Synoptic Text Interface*, the user could select a primary text to work from, and could change texts at any point. Like the *Shakespeare Interactive Archive*, the *HyperLear* would monitor a user's links, recording and displaying any journey through the iterations for re-presentation as a sort of "multimedia essay."

Furthermore, a well-designed archive can store and automatically compare the associative trails of many users, and can learn to anticipate where different types of users may be likely to go next, providing more and more refined options. These associative trails are essentially personalized polytext chains, in which users define their own authoritative relationships between texts, performance materials, and other multimedia materials. They are also "generative rules," in the McGannian sense—metadata that records the archive's history and readership (McGann 2001:138). The chains themselves become new iterations of the *Lear* polytext, and can subsequently be analyzed and compared, using built-in search and transformation functions. Not only are users free to chart their own journeys through *King Lear*, but now the records of their journeys will help scholars understand how different groups of people navigate and understand the polytext.

But in addition to these background contributions, users should also be free to add specific materials to the *HyperLear* archive, extending its resources for future users. For example, directors could supply the edited performance texts from their productions, together with commentary to explain their cuts and describe their effects upon performance. Actors would presumably want to add reviews which mention their performances, but may also submit production diaries, photos, costume sketches, and so on. Scholars could supply essays or commentary on specific passages of text, or even new conflations. Even casual readers could provide their own interpretation of the text. The sheer volume and complexity of these submissions poses a concern, but it could be automatically organized using three interlocking parameters. First, the contributors would

specify where their materials should link to the existing archive—that is, which notes append to which versions of the text, or which production photos correspond to which characters, scenes, etc. Second, contributors would have to indicate which semantic tags apply to their materials—so, to continue an earlier example, one might mark one's materials as related to <COSTUME> and <STAGING> but not <MUSIC>. Third, contributors may directly specify the types of users which might find their submitted materials most useful. In this way, the new materials will only appear to users who fit the profile, or who are searching for specific keywords which pertain to those materials, or who select the pre-established links.

The most important feature of the *HyperLear* is that *no iterations are ever erased*. Users may adapt an extant text, cutting or adding or otherwise transforming it through deformative procedures, but the results of any experiments will always constitute *a new iteration*. Similarly, the navigational trails which users leave behind may be available to guide new users, but they will never preclude the pioneering of new trails or the creation of new hyperlinks. In such an environment, the authority of all materials would theoretically be equal, just as the authority of users would be equal (though their spheres of influence would vary). The *HyperLear* environment would facilitate the in-depth reading and analysis of individual texts while constantly reminding the user of "the big picture"—the manifold configurations of the polytext. This is the sort of reading environment Margaret Jane Kidnie envisions when she stresses the need "to develop conventions with which we might guide users, not to a 'proper' choice,

but rather to an awareness of choice and an imaginative interaction with the drama" (Kidnie 164-165). Moreover, since the electronic environment enables and encourages transformative procedures, it would also serve to "draw to the reader's attention what Eco calls the 'infinite suggestive possibilities' of the script" (Kidnie 165)—not only the ways in which *King Lear* has already transformed in time, but also how it may be further altered with twenty-first century technologies—and what new insights those mutations may provide.

We have come a long way from the Complete Oxford—and in a short time. When Taylor and Wells sundered the monadic authority of the conflated text, they may have anticipated the parallel and marked up texts that would result. But surely they had no way to predict electronic databases, instantly reformattable texts, or extensible internet archives that boast an unlimited number of *Lears*. When they reoriented *Lear* from a "horizontal" to a "vertical" axis, they could not have expected that it would propel itself skyward with infinite velocity. In that expansive motion, they may see their own roles as editors reduced to insignificance. Yet, just as they themselves transformed the function of the editor by discouraging conflation, now technological affordances and Shakespeare's changing cultural reception have transformed it once again. Peter S. Donaldson speculates about the role of scholarly editors in a hypertext medium:

> Instead of attempting to establish a single authoritative text in one medium editors will become guides to the evidence provided by several media, helping the 'reader' through the web of relationships among texts, interpretations and performance options that constitute the complex life of a play as it moves through historical time.
>
> (Donaldson 117)

This is a daunting task, indeed, for the web will only get denser with time. If William Hazlitt's observations of *Lear* were correct, even Shakespeare himself became "fairly caught in the web of his own imagination" (Hazlitt 15). What hope do scholars have of untangling a web unimaginable even to Hazlitt? Perhaps humble contemporary scholars may seek counsel from blind Gloucester, who admits "I have no way, and therefore want no eyes:/ I stumbled when I saw" (4.1.20-21). Guiding users through the *King Lear* polytext may be the blind leading the blind, but it is in such wayward and virtual wanderings that unexpected wisdom can be found.

Conclusion

> How in a house
> Should many people under two commands
> Hold amity? 'Tis hard, almost impossible.
>
> (*King Lear* 2.4.210-212)

From its very first line, *King Lear* is anxious about authority. "I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall" (1.1.1-2) says Kent, only to be proven doubly wrong when Lear discloses an elaborate pageant of multiple succession that has nothing to do with either duke. The first major action of the play—the love test—causes the permanent destabilizing of authority in Lear's world. Any subsequent scene can be subjected to the same line of questioning—Who is in command? Who controls whom?—with the same indeterminate answers. Shakespeare always had the dramatic means to resolve the multiple authority. He could, for example, have brought France back in Act Five to resolve the imbalance of authority which concludes the play in both the Folio and Quarto versions. Like Fortinbras in *Hamlet*, France would represent an external commanding force that could begin to reassert stability and peace. Instead, the play ends as it began, with ambiguity: "Friends of my soul, you twain/ Rule in this kingdom, and the gored state sustain" (5.3.311-312) says Albany, to which Kent says no, and Edgar says little (in F) or nothing (in Q1).

Stephen Booth describes the ending of *King Lear* as a self-contradicting event, in which

> a sense of pattern (and hence of order, control, identity, limit) is – paradoxically – evoked by a sequence of elements that generate incidental uncertainty in us – a sequence that demonstrates that all

> categorization, limitation, definition is an arbitrary and unreliable mental convenience.
> (Booth 34)

Indeed, the idea that stability and definition are mere fabula can be identified throughout the play. "Almost from the beginning," writes Booth, "both the characters and the audience of *King Lear* must cope with the fact that the idea of the ultimate is *only* an idea, a hope, a working convenience" (Booth 12). In a play replete with anguished appeals to silent gods, the only source of philosophical stability is the acknowledgement that nothing is ever stable.

It is appropriate, and perhaps inevitable, that the external history of *Lear* would come to reflect its inner workings. In Chapter One of this paper, I argued that scholars who seek to resolve and unify *Lear's* textual multiplicity labour in denial of the polytextual complexity which has been a part of the work since its inception. Like the characters within the play, such scholars recoil from the absence of the ultimate—they find it difficult to comprehend a world without an ultimate text to stabilize and authorize all subsequent versions.

In Chapter Two, I studied the aesthetics of adaptors and directors of the past 400 years, and I outlined a system of polytextual equilibrium which balanced and authorized both texts and performances. I also demonstrated how frangible this equilibrium could be when faced with hybrid versions, performance editions, and changing cultural expectations. Likewise, within the play of *Lear*, the delicate authoritative balance of two Queens and one not-quite-King is shattered by the disruptive presence of Lear's Knights, Oswald, and the Fool. For much of the

play, Lear has no definition, no identity. He is forced to learn that no authoritative structure lasts forever.

Chapter Three and Four examined how authority may be expanded, transformed, and shared by actors and spectators within the context of performance. Actors and spectators alike must often seize the moment, exploiting open silences within the text or even improvising new lines or responses in order to create a new dynamic for the play. From the perspective of traditional scholarship, such acts are illegitimate. Spectators or actors who exploit the play's ambiguities are reminiscent of the upwardly-mobile Edmund, shrewdly spotting gaps within the tattered fabric of authority, and then expanding them to make room for themselves. Actors modulate their own onstage identities, and audiences perform subtle transformations of the shared environment, collectively exemplifying Edmund's line, "All with me's meet that I can fashion fit" (1.2.164).

In Chapter Five, I demonstrated how electronic iterations of *King Lear* can most effectively reflect the play's polytextual, mutable, and extensible nature. The efforts to contain *King Lear* within a hypertext environment—*The King Lear Archive*, *The Interactive Shakespeare Archive,* and the *Internet Shakespeare Editions*—should not be seen as attempts to delimit or control the play's proliferations. Rather, they are rudimentary attempts to *reveal* multiplicity, uncertainty, indefinition. Any structure that a user may derive from them will be akin to what Stephen Booth sees in the structure of *Lear's* catastrophe: an intricately patterned sequence that paradoxically reveals chaos. If, as Booth maintains, "the greatness of *King Lear* derives from the confrontation it makes

with inconclusiveness" (Booth 16), then the best way to comprehend that greatness is through a medium which is itself inconclusive, unfinished, and inchoate.

There is another necessary step to embracing *Lear's* multiplicity—one which few characters within the play would have the courage to enact. Michael Bristol writes, "The *longue durée* of Shakespeare's cultural authority is the product of interactions between a body of incompletely determined works and a resourceful theatrical ingenuity" (Bristol 1996:61). In other words, the brilliance of Shakespeare is not only in his words but in the gaps between them, and in how we fill those silences, on the page and on the stage. A recognition of the inherent meaning in those gaps is critical—and certainly, by the end of the play Lear and his fellow characters have confronted silence in profoundly illuminating ways. But Shakespeare's sustainability depends upon the courage of ensuing generations to fill up those silences, even if their words and actions seem unauthorized or wrong. Such courage can be difficult, especially when facing a leviathan like *Lear.* Electronic editions, which enable interaction and encourage users' contributions to the work, may help us gain the courage to experiment and play with *Lear* in innovative and revealing ways. "When we are born," says Lear, "we cry that we are come/ To this great stage of fools" (4.6.170-171). And Lear does cry, and there is ample cause for tears. But the Fool has the audacity to laugh and sing into the void, and maybe we should, too.

ENDNOTES

Chapter One: The Shakespearean Fabula

[1] I have retained the original spelling in all quotations from the Folio, although I have standardized all u/v and i/j reversals, as well as appearances of the long 's'.

[2] I will consider the authoritative implications of the Complete Oxford Shakespeare in more detail in Chapter Five.

[3] The *Division of the Kingdom* contributors also declare that "the bulk of [their] collection focuses upon the Folio" (Taylor and Warren vii).

Chapter Two: The Heap of Jewels

[4] McGann uses text analysis software on poems by Emily Dickinson and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, reversing a poem's order, isolating nouns and verbs, and otherwise distorting texts in innovative ways. See McGann 2001:105-135.

[5] Nameri argues the relationship as follows: "This is a term [Tate] could hardly have associated with what he described … as the 'extravagant Nature' of Shakespeare's 'Piece'—that 'Treasure,' that 'Heap of Jewels, unstrung and unpolisht…dazling in their Disorder.' These terms appear rather incompatible with the simple 'old' and 'honest' Play he is calling attention to in his Prologue" (Nameri 180).

[6] *King Leir* was published in 1605, and *King Lear* was probably composed 1605-1606. R.A. Foakes writes that Shakespeare's "close reading of [*Leir*] suggests that he studied the printed book" (Foakes 90).

[7] Performance editions still occasionally appear today, and their cultural function may be seen in the publication of screenplays, teleplays, and even novelizations of films.

Chapter Three: The Great Stage of Fools

[8] Shakespeare's *King Lear* was revived temporarily after the Restoration, in 1674 and 1675. However, we have no documentation for these performances, so we do not know how the Fool was represented, if he appeared at all.

[9] There is a theory that the Fool's part was designed to be doubled with Cordelia, suggesting that both parts would have been played by an effeminate boy actor.

However, stronger evidence suggests that Robert Armin, the resident clown of Shakespeare's company, would have played the Fool (see Hornback 313-314).

Chapter Four: A Freer Field of Pity

[10] In fact, Poel petitioned for the erection of just such a theatre in 1900, as part of a bid for a National Theatre in London. His proposal was lost in the same sort of bureaucratic tangles which held back the New Globe's construction for nearly a quarter of a century (Speaight 210-212).

[11] McEnery's Fool owes something to Sher's 1982 characterisation. Like Sher, McEnery used a tiny musical instrument to accompany himself in song (McEnery used a small banjo; Sher used a fiddle). And, like Sher, McEnery's Fool had a definitive and fatal exit, his "hanging body … revealed behind the central doors at the end of the mad trial scene" (Potter 97).

[12] By way of contrast, consider how disruptive it would be for a patron to address Edmund as Michael (the actor's name), or to yell out, "Those aren't queens, they're only actresses!"

[13] This is the sort of disruption which critics find so galling. As longtime theatregoers, they are used to making their own "binocular" adjustments, and disinclined to grant other patrons even partial control over their own perceptive apparati.

Chapter Five: The Web of Imagination

[14] There is some debate about the relative use of the terms "hypertext" and "hypermedia" to describe electronic archives with complex linking systems. In this chapter, I use "~~hyper~~text" expansively, in the same way I have used Grigley's term "polytext." Despite their implied textual bias, they both have the capacity to incorporate non-textual materials.

[15] The concept of parallel texts is at least 100 years older, however. In 1893, Teena Rochfort Smith proposed the publication of a four-text *Hamlet* in parallel columns. (see de Grazia 1998:411).

[16] Marked up Shakespeare texts are even older than parallel texts. Colley Cibber's 1700 edition of *Richard III* employs the following system, which Cibber explains in his Preface: "I have caus'd those that are intirely *Shakespeare's* [lines] to be printed in this *Italick Character*, and those lines with this mark (') before 'em, are generally his thoghts, in the best I could afford 'em: What is not so mark'd, or in a different Character is intirely my own" (qtd. in Marsden 22).

[17] Three of these cruxes—Kent's speech in 3.1, the challenge to the duel in 5.3, and the assignation of the play's final lines—are dealt with in the introduction and appendices. In the first case, Foakes actually resorts to displaying parallel facsimile reproductions (see Foakes 394-395), seemingly admitting that, in the case of certain types of problem, a parallel text is the only solution.

[18] XML (Extensible Markup Language) is a coding system used to identify structural and semantic components of a text, so that a computer can "read" those components as a human might, and execute useful functions upon the text. It can allow massive amounts of data to be rearranged and presented in a multitude of ways, and its extensibility allows users to add new tags whenever new data demands it.

[19] Based upon Jon Bath's plenary speech, "Perilous Parallels: Designing Better Synoptic Interfaces." 4th Annual Humanities Computing Graduate Conference, University of Alberta, January 21-22, 2005.

[20] For an online example of the same technology, see "The Enfolded Hamlet" at http://www.global-language.com/enfolded/.

[21] The only component of MIT's project that is currently available to the public is "Hamlet on the Ramparts," a multimedia archive scrutinizing 1.4 and 1.5 of *Hamlet*. See http://shea.mit.edu/ramparts/.

[22] These configurations would make sacrifice some of the user's freedom at the expense of navigability. However, users should be free to adjust their preferences at any time, or start again from a new point of entry.

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